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GLOBAL POLITICS OF LOCAL TRANSFORMATIONS:
THE TRANSITION MOVEMENT AND THE POLITICS OF RESISTANCE

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This thesis examines the Transition movement, a transnational network of local social movements, as an instance of 'the politics of resistance'. What makes this combination interesting from a theoretical point of view is the fact that the Transition movement, which focuses on community-oriented processes of economic localisation, does not easily fit into widespread ideas of the politics of resistance within critical International Relations theories. It also does not reflect traditional understandings of social movements within IR literature due to its low-profile, everyday forms of resistance. As such, this thesis is informed by two interrelated purposes: on the one hand, it highlights one existing alternative of how we could organise ourselves and our economies in potentially 'postcapitalist' ways (a practical point), and on the other hand, it uses the analysis as a way to broaden IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance (a theoretical point).

The theoretical and methodological frameworks of this thesis constitute a multiperspective and multidisciplinary approach that draws not only on the key insights gained from several critical theories within IR (i.e. green, neo-Gramscian and neo-Marxist, poststructuralist, and feminist), but also on those gained from other related disciplines, such as political science, sociology, political philosophy, and feminist economic geography. The theoretical basis is complemented with a narrative, hermeneutic methodology, thus creating what can fittingly be termed as a critical-hermeneutic approach to the research. Its strength lies in the way that it not only supports the practical and theoretical motivations underlying this thesis, but also allows to draw attention to wider questions of disciplinary boundaries, power relations, and the very meaning and purpose of International Relations.

The combination of practical, theoretical and also methodological and disciplinary concerns has been translated into three core areas of analysis, bound together by the 'hermeneutic triad' of explication, (varieties of) explanation, and exploration, as well as a narrative research orientation that embraces the researcher as an embodied and vulnerable observer. The first, empirical analysis utilises aspects of explication, 'subjectivist explanation', narrative analysis, frame analysis and substantive categories to examine the core criticisms, strategies and solutions embodied in the variety of materials produced by the Transition Network (an official 'umbrella' organisation for the movement). The second, theoretical part produces an 'objectivist explanation' that demonstrates the ways in which the Transition movement is, in fact, a form of politics of resistance and the ways in which this analysis advances IR's understandings of social movements and the politics of resistance. The third and final part combines aspects of exploration, 'constructivist explanation' and personal narrative in order to interrogate the relationship between the research and my own identity and positionality within it.

The key finding of the empirical analysis is that the movement narrative embodies deep criticisms of particular socio-cultural and (socio-)economic structures related to Western modernity (i.e.

individualistic, materialistic, and anthropocentric values, and the globalised, energy-intensive, and growth-based economic system), and the inaction of political elites. As a response, it pursues what can be fittingly termed as the optimistic diplomacy of transitional change towards economic localisation and the spread of cooperative forms of production; intrinsic and Earth-centred (biocentric) values and worldviews; and the reconciliation of community empowerment and state action. More theoretically, the movement represents 'covert', everyday resistance to some core aspects of globalisation, capitalism, scientific rationality, and modern masculinity. A key method of resistance is transforming aspects of popular common sense through principled pragmatism and positive direct action (termed as 'pragmatic prefigurativism'). The overall imaginary that emerges is one of place-based globalism, described most tellingly as 'a global politics of local transformations'. However, rather than being the perfect counterpart of the various theoretical perspectives and concepts, a key insight of the analysis concerns the multifaceted and often contradictory nature of resistance. This complexity and variety (including the local yet transnational character, the diverse, non-confrontational methods, and the emphasis on the slow transformation of everyday economic and social practices and mindsets) also contains the key to broadening common understandings of social movements and the politics of resistance.

The findings of the personal narrative, on the other hand, highlight the deep connections between some key aspects of the research and my own identity and positionality, thus demonstrating the embeddedness of values and worldviews in most of the research choices. It also draws attention to the benefits of using theoretically holistic and methodologically critical-reflective tools, which allow to draw strength from particular aspects of identity and personality. This part also reveals that although the three different analyses focus on three different aspects of the research, my own subjectivity, personality, identity, and experience and knowledge base, are embodied in all of them. The position of an 'embodied observer' does not therefore prevent from producing valid knowledge of the topic in question.

Overall, the broader implications underlying this thesis concern the purposes and boundaries of International Relations as a discipline. Raising questions about the purposes of IR research, including its dominant ontological, epistemological, and methodological commitments has been a way to engage in a personal politics of prefigurative resistance that strives for a less hierarchical and more inclusive IR. This means broadening our horizons also beyond states and state-centric research; acknowledging the partial and located nature of all knowledge claims and the benefits of more collective, reflective, and holistic viewpoints; and being attentive to the situatedness of the researcher and the various boundaries, marginalisations and relationships of power within research. Only then can IR scholars begin to understand (and take part in) the various processes and methods of radical change.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For as long as I can remember, I have been preoccupied with the issue of change; in light of the ongoing ecological, economic, social and political crises,¹ how can individual and collective human behaviour be transformed in a way that results in a more ecologically sustainable, equal and just world? Trying to answer this question has made me realise the interconnectedness of these crises – particularly that one cannot understand global ecological 'issues'² without understanding the underlying economic, social, and political issues. Realising the interconnectedness of these areas of human activity also helps to understand why change seems to be so hard to come by; why no amount of public protest³ or ecological destruction seems to have managed to transform the contemporary workings of liberal democracies, neoliberal globalisation, or the individualistic and materialistic mindsets of most 'consumer-citizens'. The ensuing disillusionment with inter-state politics *and* the more explicit forms of protest that actually legitimise states as the solution to most of our problems has encouraged me to look elsewhere for alternative paths to change. This quest led me to discover the Transition movement, characterised variously as a relocalisation movement (e.g. Bailey, Hopkins & Wilson 2010); a grassroots movement (e.g. Hardt 2013); a grassroots innovation and a 'transnational grassroots network' (Feola & Nunes 2014); a 'climate-related social innovation' (Scott Cato & Hillier 2010); a social experiment (Haxeltine & Seyfang 2009); an example of emerging 'sustainable communities' and a form of 'hands-on, DIY politics' (Barry & Quilley 2009); and a radical social movement (e.g. Stevenson 2012). This thesis views the Transition movement as a transnational network of local *social movements* – understood for present purposes simply as “collective attempts to promote or resist change in a society or group” (Benford, Gongaware & Valadez 2000, 2712) – and a form of 'politics of resistance' that is responding to some of the most pressing crises of our times by aiming to relocalise and downscale most aspects of human activity.

More broadly, the Transition movement can be viewed as a relatively high-profile example of several relocalisation movements operating across the world. As argued by Bailey, Hopkins and Wilson (2010, 595), it represents “a radical alternative template of spatial relations to that of

1 For environmental perspectives, see e.g. Global Footprint Network 2014; IPCC 2012; Living Planet Report 2012; Millennium Ecosystem Assessment 2005. For economic perspectives, see e.g. Harvey 2010; Patomäki 2012. For social breakdown and a falling quality of life in affluent countries (related to materialistic value orientations), see e.g. Lane 2000; Kasser 2002; Hamilton & Denniss 2005. For a crisis of representative politics, see e.g. Dalton 2004; and also Roos 2012 for a passionate monograph of a Dutch scholar.

2 Treating global environmental problems (e.g. decreasing biodiversity, changing and increasingly unpredictable climate conditions, decreasing quality of atmospheric conditions, and severe stress on ecosystem functions) as separate 'issues', without due regard for their interconnectedness, is exactly a major part of the problem.

3 See e.g. Ortiz et al. 2013 for the scale and common grievances of protests in recent years.

globalisation” and the practices of neoliberal globalisation. The movement owes its origins to a full time permaculture⁴ degree in Kinsale, Ireland, which in 2005 resulted in an 'Energy Descent Action Plan'⁵ for Kinsale, produced by the students and the course instructor, Rob Hopkins. In 2006, with the help of Hopkins and a local collaborator Naresh Giangrande, the first official 'Transition Town' was established in Totnes (Devon, UK) and the idea quickly spread to other towns, neighbourhoods and cities in the UK and elsewhere in the world, particularly in the West. (See e.g. Atkinson & Vilorio 2013, 582; Felicetti 2014, 2.) This also led, in 2006, to the establishment of the Transition Network, a formal 'umbrella' organisation operating legally as a charity, with the intention of bringing together the various local movements, or 'Transition initiatives', around the world. More specifically, its stated aim is to “inspire, encourage, connect, support and train communities as they self-organise around the Transition model” (Transition Network's Draft Strategy 2014, 1). It has produced, particularly through Hopkins, a stream of publications (e.g. Hopkins 2008; 2011; 2013), although their official website (<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>) contains much of the same information.

This work has led to the formation of Transition groups and initiatives first across the UK, then spreading to North America and Australasia, followed by other parts of Europe, a growing network in Latin America, and finally a number of initiatives also in Asia and South Africa (see e.g. Atkinson & Vilorio 2013, 583). As of September 2013, 462 'official' initiatives (and a further 654 'muller' initiatives) in 43 countries had registered themselves on the Transition Network website (Transition Initiatives Map 2013), although it is unclear how many of them have remained operational or how extensive or successful most of these have been. It is also notable that the great majority of the initiatives seem to be located in Europe, Northern America, Australia and New Zealand. However, this is hardly surprising since the original idea behind the Transition movement was to be a form of 'detox' for the West (Hopkins blog entry 02.04.2014) and it is arguably the West that certainly has a great need for it. This is not to claim that relocalisation processes would not be beneficial also in poorer areas of the world – on the contrary, strengthening things such as local infrastructure and food production for local use strikes as highly beneficial also in so called developing regions.

4 According to the movement's founder and core spokesperson, Rob Hopkins (2011, 98), the meaning of permaculture has changed from its original meaning as 'permanent agriculture' (and the idea of modelling agricultural systems in the way that natural systems function) to its more contemporary meaning as 'permanent culture'. This latter view expands the focus from agriculture to designing whole ways of living in more sustainable ways.

5 According to Hopkins (2011, 235) an Energy Descent Plan is “a community Plan B” which focuses on how the transition to a relocalised, low-carbon future could actually take place in a particular settlement.

In terms of the actual content of the 'Transition model', it can be viewed as a response to the converging environmental (climate change), energy (oil) and economic crises (see e.g. Hardt 2013, 11). Indeed, existing research on the movement seems to be in considerable agreement over the core issues characteristic of the movement, namely the problems of peak oil⁶, climate change, and economy providing the rationale for the Transition quest for community-based 'resilience' and 'localisation'⁷ (see e.g. Barry & Quilley 2009; Bailey et al. 2010; Atkinson and Vilorio 2013; Hardt 2013). As these goals require the commitment and active engagement of a great number of people in any given settlement, the main role of the Transition initiatives has been to act as 'catalysts' that connect the various local actors around shared narratives. However, although such outlines are well established, the more specific understandings, assumptions and contradictions underlying the core issues seem to be far from clear.⁸ This is one key area of inquiry that this thesis aims to shine light on. It will be argued that despite certain contradictions, the assumptions underlying the movement's 'grand narrative' represent a deeper resistance to some of the core features of Western modernity.

This also returns us to the most central theoretical aspect of this thesis – that of the 'politics of resistance'. This is a multidisciplinary research strand, pursued also within the discipline of International Relations (IR), particularly by those within the tradition of critical theories (see e.g. the edited collections of Gills 2000b and Eschle and Maignushca 2005a). IR theorists and scholars have generally tended to avoid 'social movements' and social movement theory, thinking of them as the domain of sociology and the domestic, not one of IR and the international. Also, they have been considered as operating in the social domain, separate from the political. The 'anti-globalisation movement'⁹ of the late 1990s and early 21st century arguably disrupted these assumptions, but even now analyses have usually focused on non-governmental organisations, global civil society, global governance, or the politics of resistance, rather than social movements *per se*. (Eschle 2005, 17.) The occasions when social movements have been analysed on their own right within international relations scholarship, it has generally taken place within the liberal-constructivist research on 'transnational social movements' (see e.g. Tarrow 2001; Khagram, Riker & Sikkink 2002). What these different analyses seem to have in common is their emphasis on high-profile, highly visible forms of public protests, such as those carried out by the Zapatistas (see e.g. Morton 2002) or the

6 Peak oil refers to “the point when the maximum rate of global production is reached and begins its terminal decline” (Chatterton & Cutler 2008, 2).

7 These are examined in further detail in chapter 4.

8 One exception is the work of Haxeltine and Seyfang (2009) which compared academic understandings of the terms *transition* and *resilience* to the way in which they are used in the movement rhetoric.

9 The movement has also been known as 'the movement of movements', the global justice movement, or the alter-globalisation movement. This will be discussed to some extent in chapter 3 in the discussion on globalisation.

related 'anti-globalisation movement' (see e.g. Gill 2000; Chin & Mittelman 2000; Eschle & Maiguashca 2005a, 2007).¹⁰ However, it is a key purpose of this thesis to use the analysis of the Transition movement to incorporate, interrogate and develop traditional understandings of both social movements and the politics of resistance.

Indeed, a core argument of this thesis is that the Transition movement represents a different kind of 'transnational' social movement and a different kind of politics of resistance (a constructive direct action form based in everyday life) compared to the more explicitly political forms engaging in public protest demonstrations against political and economic elites, but a politics of resistance nonetheless.¹¹ The seemingly non-political, community-oriented, and 'social' nature of the movement may make it a strange choice for a student of IR, but I agree with Kulynych (1997, 337) who asserts, citing Foucault (1980),

what was formerly considered apolitical, or social rather than political, is revealed as the foundation of technologies of state control. Contests over identity and everyday social life are not merely additions to the realm of the political, but actually create the very character of those things traditionally considered political. [...] Thus it is contestations at the micro-level, over the intricacies of everyday life, that provide the raw material for global domination, and the key to disrupting global strategies of domination. Therefore, the location of political participation extends [...] to the intimacy of daily actions and iterations.

Thus, the political importance of everyday resistance that challenges the way people think and act in their normal life cannot be overstated. And when replicated in sufficiently many locations, the changes in mindsets and behaviours can soon gain global importance that clearly has political consequences.

In order to delve into the politics of resistance of the Transition movement and the way in which it can help to develop these strands of research, I have adopted a multiperspective and multidisciplinary approach that draws not only on the key insights gained from several critical theories within IR (i.e. green, neo-Gramscian and neo-Marxist, poststructuralist, and feminist), but also those gained from other related disciplines, such as political science, sociology, political philosophy, and feminist economic geography. Discussions on politics, power and resistance as well as the concepts of prefigurative direct action and place-based globalism are included in order to

10 Interestingly, I have not yet found a single 'politics of resistance' analysis of the Occupy movement that swept across the world in 2011–2012.

11 A part of the motivation to examine the Transition movement as an instance of the politics of resistance came from an encounter with one of my teachers who commented that the two did not really fit together. I was surprised because, from my point of view, there was no question about it. This made me wonder about the dominant assumptions related to the politics of resistance and only served to strengthen the desire to examine the relationship of these two in the process of this thesis.

develop a broader understanding of the politics of resistance in the context of the Transition movement. This theoretical basis is complemented with a narrative, hermeneutic methodology (the topic of chapter three), thus creating what can fittingly be termed as a critical-hermeneutic approach to the research. Its strength lies in the way that it supports both practical and theoretical motivations underlying this thesis – the practical interest in understanding and drawing attention to one existing alternative of how we could organise ourselves and our economies in potentially 'postcapitalist' ways, and the critical-theoretical interest in 'explaining' the movement through the theoretical lenses which also allow broadening IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance. The theoretical and methodological choices also reflect a desire to draw attention to wider questions of disciplinary boundaries, power relations, and the very meaning and purpose of International Relations.

The key research questions that emerge from this combination of elements are: *What are the core criticisms, strategies and solutions embodied in the Transition narrative?*¹² *How is the Transition movement a form of politics of resistance and how can this case study help to advance IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance?* And finally, *how does my own identity and positionality interact with the research?* In order to answer these, this thesis proceeds as follows. First, chapter two will present and discuss the theoretical frameworks of this thesis in further detail. It begins with a discussion of the role of non-state actors in IR research, especially the emergence of social movements and other similar actors. This is followed by a discussion on critical theories and the epistemological, ontological, political and normative commitments that they hold. Finally, some key concepts and critical IR theories on the politics of resistance are considered and complemented with relevant concepts from related social science disciplines.

Secondly, chapter three presents the methodological considerations of this thesis and the research material used. These refer most of all to a narrative research orientation that confounds the classical IR distinction between explaining and understanding (e.g. Hollis & Smith 1990); the 'hermeneutic triad' of explication, (varieties of) explanation, and exploration as key methods, complemented by a number of other analytical and categorisation methods; and the selected publications of the Transition Network that these methods of analysis will be applied to.

12 Two things need to be noted here: 1) The reference to 'the Transition narrative' refers mostly to my interpretation of the research material as a kind of grand narrative (i.e. that first there is a particular state of affairs, then the Transition movement comes along, and the end result is a changed state of affairs); and 2) the research question itself does not refer only to the immediately explicit aspects, but more importantly to the understandings and assumptions underlying the surface narrative.

Thirdly, chapter four contains the empirical, qualitative analysis of the Transition narrative, and chapter five reconstructs and re-examines the analysis through the critical-theoretical conceptual vocabulary of the politics of resistance. This chapter also considers the contributions of this research to IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance. The subsequent chapter six then constitutes an 'exploration' of identity and positionality in the research process, in line with critical theories' commitment to critical-theoretical and emancipatory knowledge interests.¹³ Finally, chapter seven presents the conclusions and discusses some limitations and suggestions for further research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

This chapter on the theoretical frameworks relevant to this thesis covers a fairly broad array of theoretical discussions and perspectives. It begins with a discussion on the role of non-state actors in IR research, especially the emergence of interest in 'transnational social movements' and other similar actors. Attention will be drawn to the limited nature of popular conceptualisation of said actors and the need for broader understandings. This is followed by a discussion on critical theories and the related epistemological, ontological, political and normative commitments that also inform the conduct of this thesis. Finally, the terms *resistance*, *politics*, and *power* are examined in further detail before introducing more specific theoretical perspectives on the politics of resistance. The green, neo-Gramscian and neo-Marxist, poststructuralist, and feminist ways of making sense of the politics of resistance are complemented by multidisciplinary perspectives on 'place-based globalism' and 'prefigurative' thought and practice. I have chosen this combination of theoretical approaches for a number of reasons. Firstly, I find the epistemological, ontological, political and normative commitments that characterise critical theories particularly appealing. Secondly, it is my view that each of these theoretical perspectives hold some key insights for understanding the contradictory and multiple character of the Transition movement as well as much of 21st century (post)modern activism in the Western world, but none of the theories are quite sufficient on their own. Also, this multiperspective approach allows me to demonstrate how all knowledge claims are partial and located, but how their combination and dialogue can help to create a more holistic, collective conception of a phenomenon, even if it will always remain rooted in particular geo-historical circumstances.

¹³ For a more detailed discussion, see for example chapter 2.2.

2.1. International Relations and transnational social movements

As well known, International Relations has traditionally been known for its state-centric approach to world politics. However, at least since the publication of Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's edited book *Transnational Relations and World Politics* in 1971 and the simultaneous emergence of the field of International Political Economy (IPE), also non-state actors gradually became a subject of interest for many IR scholars. Up until the 1990's, non-state actors were considered mainly in economic terms and research focused largely on transnational economic relations and particularly on the multinational corporation. (Tarrow 2001, 3–4.) It was not until the fading of the Cold War and the enormous growth of transnational non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that many scholars (see e.g. Keck & Sikkink 1998; Risse, Ropp & Sikkink 1999) began to fully recognize that much of transnational organising was activist-based and dealt with a variety of political and humanitarian questions (Tarrow 2001, 4–5). This realisation was accompanied with a more general discovery of 'constructivism' – the role of human consciousness in international life, with a particular focus on the role of shared ideas and norms in world politics (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001, 393) – which can be seen as the traditional uniting force between IR scholars and those of contentious politics (Tarrow 2001, 5–7). Indeed, while some academics in IR began to analyse more deeply the development of international norms and the role of political actors in producing the intersubjective understandings that constitute norms, social movement scholars interested in contentious politics studied the collective beliefs, also described as transnational norms or collective action frames, produced and held by transnational social movements, advocacy networks, and advocacy coalitions (Khagram et al. 2002, 15; Payne 2001, 37–38).

Furthermore, at least four main sources of real-world politics have worked to blend International Relations and social movement research since the 1990s: local grassroots insurgencies such as the Zapatista movement that arose in Chiapas, Mexico from 1994 onwards; international protest events such as the 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999 by the anti-globalisation movement; the successful outcomes of the work done by some transnational activist coalitions; and the presence and influence of activism (mainly in the form of transnational non-governmental organisations) within and around international institutions (Tarrow 2001, 8–9). According to Tarrow (2001, 9), the early cross-fertilisation of the work done by IR scholars interested in transnational relations and social movement specialists interested in transnational contention led to at least five different directions: some focused on the development of a wide array of transnational civil actors (e.g. Risse-Kappen 1995a); some studied particular movements and movement families, such human rights movements

(e.g. Risse et al. 1999); some concentrated on organisations (e.g. Keck & Sikkink 1998); others analysed international treaties that have worked to legitimise and support different non-state actors and which activists either influenced or mobilised against (e.g. Ayers 1998); and others again focused on bi-national or regional contention involving international agreements or institutions (e.g. Imig & Tarrow 2000). What this early research demonstrated was that transnational activism plays an important role in the shaping world politics (primarily through its ability to transform international norms), thus further obscuring the divisions between domestic and global levels of politics (Khagram et al. 2002, 4) as well as influencing some of the key outcomes in international relations¹⁴ (Price 2003, 591). These conclusions have been demonstrated (and questioned) many times over in the last 15 years or so, more recently in the various chains of events arising from, for example, the Arab Spring, the various Occupy movements around the world¹⁵, and most recently, the Euromaidan, a series of public protests in Ukraine whose final outcome is still undecided.

Within this constellation of collective actors, it is social movements and transnational networks of movements that are of particular relevance for this thesis. However, it seems that much of the IR literature on 'transnational social movements' is based on a highly limited understandings of said actors. For example, in Tarrow's well-known formulation, transnational social movements are defined as

socially mobilized groups with constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interaction with powerholders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor (Tarrow 2001, 11; see also Tarrow 2011, 6–7).

In comparison, a slightly more expansive understanding is espoused by Khagram and colleagues, who assert that

transnational social movements are sets of actors with common purposes and solidarities linked across country boundaries that have the capacity to generate coordinated and sustained social mobilization in more than one country to publicly influence social change (Khagram et al. 2002, 8).

However, even they then go on to emphasise movements' abilities at *joint mobilisation* and *disruption* (ibid.), thus confirming the seemingly popular image of social movements engaging mostly in protest demonstrations. Such conceptualisations, although understandable in light of the explicitly the examples of protest mentioned above, seem to contribute to an impoverishment of imagination and understanding. As suggested by Vrasti, contemporary “IR scholars cannot explain,

14 One major example would be the end of the Cold War (see e.g. Risse-Kappen 1995b).

15 See for example Bennett (2012, 31–35) for the impact of Western Occupy movements in shaping the political agendas and discourses of the time.

understand or even imagine radical change, despite our professional training and despite the noble ambitions that have inspired many of us to go into academia” (Vrasti 2012, 121). Radical change here does not refer to political demands that lead to reform or revolution, but rather to a more fundamental questioning of dominant structural or systemic logics that may lead to their transformation. It is the very impoverishment of imagination, the widespread inability to recognise any resistance as meaningful or relevant to IR unless it directly confronts international political or economic actors, that echoes in Vrasti's diagnosis of most IR scholarship.

In contrast, I began this thesis with a considerably more open ended understanding of social movements as “collective attempts to promote or resist change in a society or group” (Benford, Gongaware & Valadez 2000, 2712). *Transnational* social movements could simply be considered as those whose visions, concerns, or activities extend beyond particular locales or nation-states. The main benefit of this expanded understanding is that it is not loaded with necessities such as 'sustained contentious interaction' with predetermined targets (i.e. 'powerholders', international institutions, or multinational economic actors) or with the requirements of joint mobilisation and disruption. Similarly, I would argue that having participants in two or more countries is not a prerequisite for characterising a movement as 'transnational' – in a globalised world, almost everything has global or transnational relevance, not to mention a transnational audience. The concept of *place-based globalism*, as elaborated on by Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson (Gibson-Graham 2008), transcends these issues by drawing attention to the global relevance of local action. It is particularly useful when examining the Transition movement, a transnational network of locally based social movements, which does not easily fit into the existing, preconceived limits of transnational social movements. I will elaborate on this concept in section 2.3.4.

Furthermore, the interest in social movements and other similar actors as an object of IR research is also evident in more critical strands of IR theorising. The edited collections of Gills (2000b) and Eschle and Maiguashca (2005a) can be viewed as prominent representatives of the efforts to develop the particular strand of critical IR research that focuses on 'the politics of resistance'. However, conceptualising what this term entails seems to be far from straightforward as each theoretical 'school' has its own, often implicit, occasionally explicit, ideas of the subject matter. As a core rationale for this thesis is to draw insights from and contribute to this strand of research, the next sections will take a closer look at critical theories and the multiple ways of conceptualising the politics of resistance.

2.2. Critical theories and the related epistemological, ontological, political and normative considerations

Before delving into the politics of resistance, a necessary word about critical IR theories¹⁶. As argued by Robert Cox (1981, 128, emphasis in the original), "[t]heory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose" and generally serves one of two distinct purposes:

One is simple, direct response: to be a guide to help solve the problems posed within the terms of the particular perspective [...]. The other is more reflective upon the process of theorising itself: to become more clearly aware of the perspective which gives rise to theorising, and its relationship to other perspectives (to achieve a perspective on perspectives); and to open up the possibility of choosing a different valid perspective from which the problematic becomes one of creating an alternative world. (Ibid.)

According to Cox, the first purpose corresponds to *problem-solving theory* which takes the prevailing institutions and social and power relationships for granted and, in fact, aims to make them work as smoothly as possible. The second purpose, on the other hand, gives rise to *critical theory* which calls into question the very same institutions and social and power relationships that problem-solving theory takes for granted. Furthermore, while problem-solving theory is concerned with addressing problems usually within a single area of specialisation, critical theory is oriented towards a more holistic understanding of the subject at hand. (Cox 1981, 128–129.) Although such a dichotomy carries with itself the idea that one (critical theory) is better than the other (problem-solving theory), both are of course needed. While critical theory is more tuned to long-term change, problem-solving theory is particularly useful when the timeframe for action is short. Nevertheless, as this thesis is motivated by a desire for more fundamental changes in politics, economics and social relationships and is guided by the view that the researcher him/herself is a part of this very process, critical theory emerges as the unquestionable basis of this research.

Furthermore, Eschle and Maiguashca (2007, 285) provide a useful description of critical theories as those of Marxist, Gramscian, Habermasian, poststructuralist, postcolonial and feminist persuasion, although I would argue that many green theories should be added to this list. Eschle and Maiguashca also make an attempt at a broad definition of critical theories: At the level of epistemology, these theories expose the social and historical nature of what has become common sense, and illuminate the relationship between knowledge and power. This also involves critically reflecting on the research process and the impact of the researcher. At the level of ontology and the political, critical theories explore the relations of domination and oppression and the ways in which

¹⁶ I use the term critical theories – plural and lower case – to distinguish it from the Critical Theory more specifically, although not exclusively, associated with the Frankfurt School.

concrete social struggles seek to overturn them. Finally, at the normative level, critical theories tend to have an emancipatory, critical knowledge interests that make them essentially a form of *politicised* scholarship. (Ibid.) Although this thesis is informed by all of these elements, the aspect of domination is particularly notable because it plays a role also in the methods of analysis. Rather than accepting the single-handed legitimacy of the logico-scientific form of analysis and presentation, this thesis also incorporates a personal narrative as its own form of self-liberating practise (discussed in further detail in chapter three). As such, it is influenced by (poststructuralist) feminist thought and research ethic (see e.g. Ackerley & True 2008).

2.3. The politics of resistance deconstructed: Resistance, politics, power

As argued by Eschle and Maiguashca (2007, 285), the growing critical-theoretical literature in IR that deals specifically with the politics of resistance, understood as the domain of social movements, civil society and so forth, has remained surprisingly underdeveloped both empirically and theoretically. The essential elements in conceptualising *resistance* – what, why, and how – are usually expressed somewhat implicitly rather than explicitly. For a clearer understanding of the possible dimensions of what constitutes resistance, multidisciplinary social science research is a useful starting point. For example, Hollander and Einwohner (2004) examined several hundred social science articles and books from 1995–2004 in which resistance was a key theoretical or empirical topic. Although disagreements abounded in the literature, the authors were able to create a seven-part typology of resistance which included 1) overt resistance; 2) covert resistance; 3) unwitting resistance; 4) target-defined resistance; 5) externally-defined resistance; 6) missed resistance; and 7) attempted resistance. All of these included *some activity that can be perceived as oppositional* – meaning that they strive to change, question or pose a challenge to something – but they varied according to the intent of the resistor and whether the target(s) or observer(s) were likely to recognise the activity as a form of opposition.

More specifically, *overt resistance* represents the consensual core of the term; it is intentional and visible oppositional behaviour that is readily recognized as such by both targets and observers. *Covert resistance*, on the other hand, refers to oppositional activities that are intentional and can be recognised by culturally aware observers, but are not necessarily recognised by the targets. (Hollander & Einwohner 2004, 545.) The following three types – unwitting resistance, target-defined resistance, externally-defined resistance – represent forms of resistance that are, in fact,

unintentional. *Unwitting resistance* is behaviour that is perceived as threatening by both targets and observers; *target-defined resistance* is behaviour that is perceived threatening by targets but not observers; and *externally-defined resistance* is behaviour that is perceived threatening by observers, but not targets. Finally, *missed resistance* is oppositional behaviour that is intentional and recognised by targets but not observers, and *attempted resistance* is intentional but not recognised by either targets or observers. (Hollander & Einwohner 2004, 545–546). Although not all of these are relevant for the task at hand, it is still useful to comprehend that resistance is a highly multifaceted phenomenon that cannot be reduced to public protest demonstrations.

More problematically, this fairly simplistic typology also has its downfalls. For one, it seems to take for granted that the 'targets' of resistance are conscious actors (whether collective or individual). How can, for example, feminist resistance against masculine values be perceived by 'the target' when the target is present everywhere and can hardly be easily defined? Nevertheless, what this exploration of resistance seems to offer for this thesis is, more than anything, a recognition that striving for *change* is inherently a form of resistance, a challenge to or a questioning of *something*, whatever it may be in a given context. Another insight is that non-confrontational, 'everyday resistance' (understood as covert resistance), which often goes unnoticed by the traditionally powerful, can still be viewed as a meaningful form of resistance. It often draws on 'low-profile techniques' and therefore "helps to protect the powerless from repression by masking the resistant nature of their activities" (Hollander & Einwohner 2004, 539). I will return to this discussion in chapter 5.

In addition to the question of what is resistance, the question of what is *politics* seems to be mostly left untouched in the IR literature on the politics of resistance. Teivainen (2007, 74) relies on Roberto Mangabeira Unger's two definitions of politics in his discussion of the World Social Forum. While the narrow meaning of politics refers to the "conflict over the mastery and uses of governmental power", a more broad understanding sees politics as the "struggle over the resources and arrangements that set the basic terms of our practical and passionate relations" (Unger 1987, 145–146). A perhaps clearer definition, although referring essentially to the same elements, is provided by Jones (2013) who characterises politics as associated "(1) with civil government, the state, and public affairs; (2) with human conflict and its resolution; or (3) with the sources and exercise of power". Although this definition is useful in broadening the traditional understanding of politics as the realm of political parties and nation-states, it also begs the question of what is *power* – a question that is obviously central to the concept of a politics of resistance, but is also

rarely explicitly elaborated on (see Maiguashca 2006 for an exception).

In order to gain a fairly quick understanding of the term, Haurgaard's (2010) discussion strikes as useful. He argues that power is best viewed through four dimensions which have traditionally been considered as forms of domination, but can also be used as forms of empowerment. The first dimension, as understood by Dahl (1957) and Weber, Gerth and Mills (1948), is the classical power as *power over* – the ability of A to make B do what B would not otherwise do. The second dimension of power is two-dimensional and refers, for example, to the way in which certain actors are better positioned within or better able to manipulate the relevant *structural* conditions in their favour. The third dimension of power refers to the culturally taken-for-granted reproduction of social structures of power and privilege by social actors themselves. Finally, in the fourth dimension, power is viewed as a network of social relations (a Foucauldian conception of power) where compliance is internalised. (Haugaard 2011.)

Another way to conceptualise power comes from Maiguashca (2006) who discusses the term explicitly in the context of social movements and critical IR theory. She draws out three 'modalities' of power: material, discursive, and ideological:

Material power refers to those practices and capacities that explicitly and materially constrain or enable our bodies and behaviour. The expression of this modality of power is often, but not always, coercive in nature and is exercised in a range of contexts, that is, statist (for example, police, army), legislative (for example, national or international law), economic (for example, capital) or family (for example, wife battery). Discursive power includes not only the language that we use to speak and write about particular subjects, but also the cultural metaphors, stereotypes and representations that sustain our commonsense understanding of the world. Lastly, ideological power refers to the ideas, beliefs and normative values that we hold which can, and often does, exceed the language and metaphors that we employ. (Maiguashca 2006, 251–252.)

In comparing the two conceptualisations of power, it would seem that Haugaard's first two dimensions relate mainly to the material power identified by Maiguashca and the latter two to the discursive and ideological aspects identified by Maiguashca. Most of all, the discursive and ideological modalities of power seem to relate closely to the culturally taken-for-granted reproduction of social structures of power and privilege.

These insights will be discussed further in the following sections which take a closer look at some of the green, neo-Gramscian and neo-Marxist, poststructuralist, and feminist ways of making sense of the politics of resistance and the ontological assumptions that they hold about politics, resistance, and power. After discussing some prominent examples of each of these approaches within IR, I then

introduce and discuss two elements that are rarely, and even then only implicitly present in IR theorising; those of 'place-based globalism' and 'prefigurative' thought and practice.

2.3.1. Green perspective: The power structures of world politics

Considering that the Transition movement began in many ways as an environmental movement, a specifically green perspective is warranted, provided in this case by Matthew Paterson's green IR theory. According to Paterson (2001, 40), the appropriate targets of a politics of (environmental) resistance are four, interrelated power structures of world politics: *the state system*, *capitalism*, (scientific, technocratic) *knowledge*, and *patriarchy*. He defines the state system as "the consolidation of institutional complexes of power around territorially defined states" (op. cit. 42), characterised by the ecologically problematic dynamics of state-building (territorially defined war-making and identity construction as well as market-based accumulation to resource, fund and legitimise the state), military competition, environmental displacement, and the naturalisation of hierarchy also in other areas of social life (Paterson 2001, 42–45). Capitalism, on the other hand, is defined as a social system based on the commodification of labour for the extraction of surplus value. The core problem, as per Paterson, is that a capitalist economic system is characterised by its requirements of growth (a lack of growth in the scale of the economy is by definition a crisis, a recession), commodification, profit maximisation, and inequality on a global scale (op. cit. 45–50). Paterson defines the third power structure, knowledge, more specifically as modern scientific rationality. This is characterised particularly by the presumed human-nature duality which has made the natural world an object of instrumental use ('natural resources'), studied through reductionist methodologies that fail to account for the crucial interactions between things, and the dominance of scientific rationality and legitimacy. This latter aspects has translated to control over environments and areas being given to particular elites and 'experts' rather than the communities that depend on them (op. cit. 50–51). Finally, Paterson's fourth power structure, patriarchy, refers more specifically to the ideals of modern masculinity. This entails the values of individualism, instrumental rationality, and domination (hierarchy) prevalent in modern masculinity, replicated in the way that the main polluters – mostly affluent, white, Western men – are able to displace the effects of environmental problems primarily to women, non-Westerners and ethnic minorities (op. cit. 51–52).

The implications that this theory holds for conceptualising the politics of resistance are multiple. It seems reasonable to argue that resistance is essentially any activity that poses a challenge to the

above-mentioned power structures (whether material, discursive or ideological in form); politics is understood expansively as not the sole territory of states and oppositional behaviour related to states, but also as a question of resisting both external and internal sources of power: and power itself is clearly understood broadly, including material, discursive and ideological forms. However, the emphasis is on a structural understanding of power and its the material consequences, and less on a Foucauldian, network form of power where power is pervasive and in many ways inescapable.

2.3.2. Neo-Gramscian and other neo-Marxist perspectives: Resistance to neoliberal globalisation

Neo-Gramscian and other Marxist-influenced conceptualisations of the politics of resistance can be seen to represent the contemporary 'common sense' of the topic and they thus represent the view against which nearly all of the subsequent critical theory perspectives position themselves. Essentially, these perspectives tend to concentrate on what in Hollander and Einwohner's typology was termed as *overt resistance*, a form of resistance that can hardly be mistaken for anything else. As such, it reflects a view where forces of power are contrasted with less powerful forces of resistance and it is the act of opposition, the demands placed on political and economic power that makes them political. The core idea is one where social movements and other forces arising from (global) civil society – the realm seemingly separate from political and economic realms, but also inevitably intertwined with them (see e.g. Cox 1999; Gill 2000) – are seen as potential counter-hegemonic actors, who are resisting the causes and consequences of neoliberal economic globalisation (see e.g. Gills 2000a; Chin and Mittelman 2000; Morton 2002; Birchfield and Freyberg-Inan 2005; Gill 2008). Although the Transition movement's approach to change does not neatly fit such conceptualisations of resistance, these perspectives can nonetheless provide important insights into the historical context under which many social movements have emerged in the last 20 years or so and some of the core 'targets' of resistance prevalent in most of these movements. A Gramscian influenced analysis, particularly the concept of *common sense*, also infuses with this historical context and helps to understand the politics of resistance embodied in the Transition approach.

To fully understand the historical context of the Transition movement, one cannot avoid a brief discussion on *globalisation*. Although definitions vary considerably, globalisation can be understood as a threefold process. *Economic globalisation* refers primarily to the spread of the

neoliberalism, an ideology and economic orthodoxy of market liberalisation, 'free trade', financial deregulation, privatised public services, and so on (translating to the increasing power of transnational corporations)¹⁷; *political globalisation* signifies the formation of international politico-economic and military collectives (such as the EU, WTO, and NATO) which operate, in some ways, above the nation state; and *cultural globalisation* suggests an intensifying global consciousness and global social interrelatedness, especially through new technological developments (i.e. the internet) and, for an affluent minority, easier travel across countries and continents (see e.g. Juppi, Peltokoski & Pyykkönen 2003, 275; Eschle 2002, 316). However, when neo-Marxist scholars refer to globalisation, they are generally referring to the processes of economic globalisation, or neoliberalism. Gradually adopted by the Nixon administration in the early 1970s, aggressively championed by the Reagan–Thatcher coalition, strengthened by the oil crisis of 1973, the 1980s foreign debts crises, and the collapse of Soviet communism in 1989–1991 (all contributing to the increased power of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank (WB) and international capital, the biggest drivers of neoliberal economics), neoliberalism was by the early 1990s heralded as the only game in the political, global town (see e.g. Green & Griffith 2002, 50–52).

However, the 1990s also became characterised by an increasing opposition to the neoliberal form of economic globalisation. Although the separation of politics and (the supposedly neutral) economics has been one of the ways in which democratic calls for change have been contained under neoliberalism or 'global capitalism' (see e.g. Teivainen 2007), many people have acknowledged and opposed the undemocratic nature of global institutions and the lack of accountability of transnational corporations. Around the world, resistance to the neoliberal world order has materialised in many forms, such as Islamic fundamentalism, the resurgence of nationalist (and protectionist) politics in many postcommunist states, and food riots and the election of leftist governments in Latin America. In addition, social resistance has also materialised in the form of transnational activism. Labour unions, environmental organisations, indigenous groups and various other transnationally connected groups have organised to protest neoliberal policies. (Roberts 2008, 328–329, 341; Escobar 2010, 7–8.)

17 A more comprehensive characterisation of neoliberal economic globalisation is provided, for example, by Gills who argues that four processes are present simultaneously:

- “1 protection of the interests of capital and expansion of the processes of capital accumulation on world scale;
- 2 a tendency towards homogenisation of state policies and state forms to render them instrumental to the protection of capital and the process of capital accumulation on a world scale, via a new 'market ideology';
- 3 the formation and expansion of a new tier of transnationalized institutional authority above the state's, which has the aim and purpose of re-articulating states to the purposes of facilitating global capital accumulation; and
- 4 the political exclusion of dissident social forces from the arena of state policy-making, in order to desocialize the subject and insulate the neoliberal state form against the societies over which they preside, thus facilitating the socialization of risk on behalf of capital.” (Gills 2000a, 4.)

Many of these movements came together in the late 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century in the 'movement of movements', called by the media as the anti-globalisation movement. Its key defining moment may have been the 'Battle of Seattle' in 1999 where roughly 50.000 demonstrators protested against the third World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial meeting designed for increasing market liberalisation (della Porta et al. 2006, 1; Edelman 2009, 111). From Seattle onwards, all of the major international summits (in Genoa, Prague, Johannesburg, London, and elsewhere) were accompanied with protest demonstrations by broad and varied coalitions of local and global social movements, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists of varied backgrounds. Due to the diversity of participants, there was also a diversity of aims and visions: a large portion of protesters sought to reform the global system of governance and economics in more democratic ways, others wanted to simply rebuild the role of the state in order to contain the ongoing processes of globalisation (Green & Griffith 2002, 55), and yet others had a vision of "radical decentralisation and local economic integration and the reconstruction of community" (Atkinson & Vilorio 2013, 586). This latter aspect certainly resonates with the Transition approach and links it with this particular strand of the anti-globalisation movement. Furthermore, the sheer scale of protest, its diversity of participants and organisations, and its unconventional characteristics soon inspired a stream of commentaries (see e.g. Gill 2000) that saw the movement as a counter-hegemonic force that could provide alternatives to the neoliberal world order. Understanding this piece of history is, I believe, crucial for understanding many of the dominant views on the politics of resistance. It is also important for understanding the Transition movement itself as it strikes very much as a continuation of the vision of building small-scale alternatives to the expansion of globalised capitalism.

Furthermore, history does not of course end here. Although the terrorist attacks of 9/11 diverted attention away from questions of economic globalisation more towards questions of war and peace (Green & Griffith 2002, 64), the global financial crisis that began in 2008 and the austerity measures intensified by the related Eurozone crisis also brought many people back to the streets. In the West, for example the Spanish Indignados and the Occupy movements of 2011–2012, drew inspiration from past movements. In fact, it seems evident that many of these movements – the Zapatistas¹⁸, the global justice movement, the Occupy movement, even the Transition movement – share certain characteristics which are crucial for later conceptualisations of resistance. Although

18 This is a social movement which in 1994 rebelled against the consequences of neoliberal expansion into Mexico and subsequently created self-governing indigenous communities in Chiapas, Mexico.

the contexts vary considerably, each of these movements seem to have responded, among other things, to the real-life consequences related to economic globalisation; have engaged in a form of rebellion rather than a revolution as the intent is not to overthrow the system or government as such, but to create alternative forms of *empowerment*; have aimed to build a more just order from the individual and community level upward rather than top down; have experimented with self-governance¹⁹ and participatory rather than top-down forms of organising; and have created new subjectivities (see Stahler-Sholk 2010, 269–286 for a discussion on the Zapatistas).

An essential *method* of political resistance then becomes that of transforming *popular common sense*, understood as “[t]he beliefs which animate social action” (Rupert 2009, 183), or “an amalgam of historically effective ideologies, scientific doctrines and social mythologies” (Rupert 2003, 185). The fact that the Transition approach emphasises telling new stories as a method of change indicates a clear connection between these two. The actual content of the 'Transition common sense' will be elaborated on in the analysis in chapters four and five.

2.3.3. Poststructuralist perspective: The ambiguities of resistance

Points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case [...]. (Foucault 1976, 96.)

The poststructuralist current of thought on the politics of resistance is particularly well represented by Amoore (2006), who emphasises the contradictions and contingencies inherent within acts of resistance or dissent. She draws attention to the way in which resistance is usually understood through highly unhelpful dichotomies, such as power / resistance, or refusal / complicity. These are based on the problematic notion that agents are representatives of either power *or* resistance and they either refuse *or* comply with powers that are considered external to them. However, such framing ignores the contradictory subject positions (e.g. protesting the very same things that one supports through consumer habits) that could otherwise become politicised and reveal the complicity of our actions in the very things that we 'resist'. Similarly, proclaiming a great refusal contains an assumption that it is possible to step outside of relations of power and thus denies the

¹⁹ The Zapatistas in particular created self-governed, autonomous communities that provided their members all of the social programs and services that are traditionally provided by the state (education, health, a system of justice). While still occupying, many of the more permanent local Occupy movements also aimed to provide various services, such as teaching, health care, food, legal aid, and so on.

points of power and privilege within resistance itself. Thirdly, the categories of the powerful / powerless or the perpetrator / resisters ignore the multiple points of identity and identification which can never provide a single, stable source of unity. Finally, rather than proclaiming a loud and obvious Refusal, "it is often the least obtrusive moment of dissent, hidden away in the seams of the global political economy [...], that most effectively disrupt our sense of normalization [...]" (Amoore 2006, 260).

It is evident that politics, power and resistance are understood here in a much broader sense compared to more Marxist analyses. Politics is inherently a question of power, but power itself is both external and internal, it is a network of *power relations* with multiple points of resistance (and complicity) rather than an unambiguous division between us and them. As such, the possibilities of resistance appear to cut through all of the seven categories provided by Hollander and Einwohner. However, even here power appears to be viewed as something inherently negative and oppressive that calls for resistance and dissent, however incomplete and contradictory any such resistance may be. Even so, this perspective is an invaluable tool for a more critical analysis of the Transition approach.

2.3.4. Feminist perspectives: Principled pragmatism and place-based globalism

When it comes to feminist interventions into the politics of resistance, the work of Eschle and Maiguashca (2005a; 2005b; 2007; also Eschle 2005) stand out. Their investigations into the feminist strands of the global justice movement (which they call the 'anti-globalisation movement') and the subsequent efforts to develop the theoretical outlines of the politics of resistance are particularly enlightening and useful. While most IR theories, critical theories included, tend to avoid addressing the range of emotional, psychological, and other forces affecting the political consciousness of activists, feminists such as Eschle and Maiguashca (2007) have no qualms about entering this realm. Indeed, they argue for the need to beyond mapping the broad aspects of global power and also explore the ways in which civil society actors *themselves* conceptualise the problems that motivate their actions. Furthermore, their research also provides a number of other crucial insights into the politics of resistance.

Firstly, their work draws attention to the way in which resistance can take place in a variety of ways and locations. For example, they show how the practices of 'anti-globalisation' activists vary from

the instrumental and institutional to the expressive and self-developmental; how the audiences they appeal to range from the public to the private; and how a wide variety of methods are being utilised. Secondly, this research highlights how ideational (discursive, ideological, cultural) and material (political economy, social) goals are mutually constitutive in the way that many activists seek both kinds of changes simultaneously. Thirdly, attention is drawn to the way in which many understandings of the politics of resistance fail to take into consideration the power relations (such as gender) *within* movement politics *and* in the wider culture – issues which can be seen as the product of both intended and unintended actions and not the work of a single, clearly defined opponent. Finally, this work also highlights how contemporary movements are often highly pragmatic – Eschle and Maiguashca use the term *principled pragmatism* – in the sense that they are experimental, flexible, and thus responding in different ways in different contexts rather than being dictated by a particular ideology. (Eschle & Maiguashca 2007, 294–297.)

Another useful way into a feminist-influenced conceptualisation of a politics of resistance (although the term itself is not used here explicitly) comes from outside of IR in the work of feminist economic geographers Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson (Gibson-Graham 2008). They argue that a new revolutionary imaginary of *place-based globalism* – economic and social transformation that is place-based²⁰ yet global – has confounded the ”time-worn oppositions between global and local, revolution and reform, opposition and experiment, institutional and individual transformation” (Gibson-Graham 2008, 659) because these elements are inevitably intertwined. The key elements of place-based globalism, they suggest, are

- centrality of subjects and ethical practices of self-cultivation;
- role of place as a site of becoming and as the ground of a global politics of local transformations;
- uneven spatiality and negotiability of power which is always available to be skirted, marshaled, or redirected through ethical practices of freedom [...];
- everyday temporality of change and the vision of transformation as a continual struggle to change subjects and places and conditions of life under inherited circumstances of difficulty and uncertainty. (Gibson-Graham 2008, 660.)

The key to this imaginary is that rather than waiting for a revolution that will create a different kind of global economy and a system of global governance, energies are focused on transforming *local* economies in the present and in the everyday, in the face of globalisation (Gibson-Graham 2008, 662). In this context, local economies engaged in a range of 'postcapitalist' practices are understood as *places* with different economic identities and capacities also beyond the global capitalist system.

²⁰ 'Place' in this conceptualisation can refer to any number of things, such as communities, households, workplaces, civic organisations, and so forth.

More philosophically,

place is that which is not fully yoked into a system of meaning, not entirely subsumed to a (global) order; it is that aspect of every site that exists as potentiality. Place is the "event in space," operating as a "dislocation" with respect to familiar structures and narratives. It is the unmapped and unmoored that allows for new moorings and mappings. Place, like the subject, is the site and spur of becoming, the opening for politics. (Gibson-Graham 2008, 662.)

The activities and successes of social movements have demonstrated that "small-scale changes can be transformative and that place-based politics can be a revolutionary force when replicated across a global terrain" (Gibson-Graham 2008, 662). Therefore meaningful change does not require replacing a global power structure at the same hierarchical, global, organised level. Rather, change – and by extension, resistance – is located in the "continual struggle to transform subjects and places and conditions of life under circumstances of difficulty and uncertainty" (Gibson-Graham 2008, 662). Politics, in this vision, relates to an ethical practice of becoming, involving articulation and subjectivation. Similarly, 'place-based globalism' then becomes an alternative logic of politics, one that focuses on the possibilities of the present rather than the goals of the future. (Gibson-Graham 2008, 663.) Power, in this vision, is essentially a positive force to be harnessed, not only something to be resisted.

2.3.5. Prefigurative perspectives: Positive direct action as a method of resistance

Finally, this last section introduces the idea of 'prefigurative politics' into the constellation of the politics of resistance. This concept owes its roots to anarchist thought and practice. For anarchists, it means, first and foremost, that "there should be an ethically consistent relationship between the means and ends" (Milstein 2010, 68). Within contemporary activism (whether considered explicitly anarchist or not), this has generally referred to two interrelated dimensions: organisational and tactical. As explained by Graeber (2009, 11), prefigurative politics refers to "the mode of organisation and tactics undertaken which reflects the future society being sought by the group". Theoretically, such a definition leaves open the actual content of the organisational and tactical methods, thus allowing a variety of options. This potential for openness seems to be evident also in other definitions, such as this:

movements with a prefigurative strategy for social change [...] [are] those attempting to create social change by structuring their own practice according to the principles they want to see govern the whole society (Leach 2013, 182).

Similarly, suggestions that prefigurative movements follow the Gandhian idea to 'be the change you

wish to see in the world' (see e.g. Howard & Pratt-Boyden 2013, 234), or are “seeking to realize in the here and now the transformations we envision for the future” (Brissette 2013, 223), also seems to leave open the content of such transformations. However, in practice, these contents have also usually been defined. Indeed, in most cases, prefigurative movements are characterised as having horizontal and decentralised (as opposed to hierarchical and centralised) organisational structures based on the values of “democratic participation and power-free social engagement”²¹ (Howard & Pratt-Boyden 2013, 233). However, this thesis employs an open-ended, Gandhian perspective on prefiguration and asks, rather than assumes, what is the content of the change that the Transition movements embodies.

In terms of tactics, prefigurative movements are characterised by direct action methods. According to Milstein (2010, 70), direct action can be divided into two different forms: Its 'positive' form is proactive, based on the 'power to create', and focuses on doing and creating in the present the desired structures and processes of the future. The 'negative' form on the other hand is reactive, based on the 'power to resist', and focuses on using direct means to try and block something from happening or continuing. However, I would argue that this division does not always hold as the positive, proactive form of direct action can simultaneously be a way to resist, and thus also a form of 'negative' direct action. This is also reflected in the way in which organisational and tactical questions intertwine: in many cases the organisational experimentations *become* the tactic for change by demonstrating alternatives (see e.g. Maeckelbergh 2011). Either way, what the prefigurative, direct action perspective can contribute to the theoretical contours of the politics of resistance is this realisation, echoed in feminist critical theory, that positive forms of direct action can be also be a method of resistance and that the core issues of politics and power can actually be those relating to social actors and their concrete practices of radical reconstruction.

3. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND RESEARCH MATERIAL

This chapter presents the methodological choices and the research material used in this thesis. The methodological aspects complement the ontological, epistemological, normative, and political

21 Whether such a thing as 'power-free social engagement' actually exists is highly debatable. This most likely refers to the conscious removal of *official* hierarchies, but this does not, of course, prevent the rise of unofficial hierarchies.

commitments reflective of critical theories and together construct what can only be termed as a critical-hermeneutic and narrative approach to the research. The first part of the chapter introduces the philosophical and political aspects of my methodology, reflected most of all in the narrative research orientation. The second part presents a more detailed description of the analytical and structural methods used in this thesis, which draw heavily on the 'hermeneutic triad' of explication, (varieties of) explanation, and exploration, complemented by a number of other analytical and categorisation methods. Finally, the last section presents the research material and explains the rationale for choosing each of the various materials.

3.1. A narrative research orientation as a politics of resistance of my own

Before delving into the more practical aspects relating to research methods, I will present a brief discussion on the more philosophical and political aspects of methodology. This relates to the constant efforts of setting the 'boundaries of IR' which have been a continual source of puzzlement and frustration for me. Indeed, during my time at Tampere University, several teachers and students have repeatedly tried to set some kind of concrete limits on what IR is about (i.e. relating to nation-states or questions of power). Similarly, there has been a noticeable pressure felt by students that they must somehow prove that their work *is*, in fact, a work of IR. In a similar vein, my own choice of empirical focus – what is at its base essentially an environmental social movement, but strives and has grown to be much more – has been interrogated as not being entirely suitable for IR, even though the combination of past research and introductory IR textbooks seem to be much more forgiving. For example, in Burchill and Linklater's (2005) list of some recent 'disciplinary preoccupations' in IR, one can find social movements as one the “dominant actors” (op. cit. 12); “duties to nature, to future generations and to non-human species” (op. cit. 13) as some of the main ethical issues; and interestingly, “[b]uilding links with social theory, historical sociology and 'world history', and dismantling barriers between International Relations, Political Theory and Ethics” (ibid.) as some of the main prospects for *multidisciplinarity* (which is thus treated in the positive rather than in the negative). The varied nature of IR also becomes evident in Brown and Ainley's (2005) effort at defining IR:

On the basis that there must be some kind of limiting principle if we are to study anything at all, we might agree that International Relations is the study of cross-border transactions in general, and thus leave open the nature of these transactions, but even this will not do, since it presumes the importance of political boundaries [...] (Brown & Ainley 2005, 7)

Indeed, if IR textbooks are this open about the content of IR, the question then becomes, why the

need to constantly question what is and is not a 'proper' object of research for a student of IR? The easy answer – and I do not have a better one – is that this is a question of power and domination. It is a form of micropolitics of the classroom, the university, and the practitioners of IR that tries to set the limits of the possible. As such, it invites resistance, indeed *demand*s resistance. As my choice of topic is not that controversial, it is my narrative research orientation that tries to somehow strive for self-liberation. It represents a politics of resistance to what Penttinen (2004, 41) refers to as the “hierarchical inherently masculinist logico-scientific form” of traditional academic writing. Although such a form is *also* present in much of this thesis, it is contrasted and accompanied with personal self-reflections that also take centre stage during the course of this thesis. Another reason for this experiment rises from the obvious potential contradiction between criticising scientific rationality (in theory and in the context of the Transition movement) and at the same time privileging the very same form of thinking through my own writing. By experimenting and using diverse forms of analysis and expression, I *take part* in a prefigurative politics of resistance.

To be clear, when I speak of a narrative research orientation, I am referring, first and foremost, to a narrative form of knowledge that mixes the subjective and the objective, focuses on human intentions and actions, and looks at the particular circumstances of time and space, rather than the universal, ahistorical categories logico-scientific knowledge (Czarniawska 2004b, 651). As Bochner (2001) so eloquently puts it, a narrative orientation

moves away from a singular monolithic conception of social science towards pluralism that promotes multiple forms of representation and research; away from facts and towards meanings; away from master narratives and toward local stories; away from idolizing categorical thought and abstracted theory toward embracing the values of irony, emotionality, and activism; away from assuming the stance of disinterested spectator and toward assuming the posture of feeling, embodied and vulnerable observer; away from writing essays and toward telling stories. (Bochner 2001, 135.)

Such an orientation is extremely challenging as it goes against what the student in me considers common sense, and thus my efforts do not (yet) do justice to the Bochner's poetic description. Nonetheless, I consider it important to try and believe that the journey is worth taking.

3.2. The hermeneutic triad as research method: Explication, explanation, and exploration

In terms of the practical framework in conducting the analysis, this thesis utilises the 'hermeneutic triad' of Paul Hernadi (1987) as interpreted by Barbara Czarniawska (2004a; 2004b). It supports and

complements the above-mentioned narrative research orientation seamlessly, while also allowing for critical analysis and reflection. The hermeneutic triad consists of three layers of analysis: explication, explanation and exploration. *Explication* is essentially a summary of the text or narrative in question and can also be characterised as reconstruction, reproductive translation, or 'standing under' the text. *Explanation*, on the other hand, is preoccupied with interpreting, often in a critical vein, why or how the text says what it does. As such, it can be viewed as a form of deconstruction, inferential detection, or 'standing over' the text. Finally, *exploration* refers to a more creative form of analysis where the reader brings her own life and experience into the narrative, something which is often considered inappropriate for scientific texts, but which is often utilised, for example, by feminist scholars. In contrast to the first two, exploration can be characterised as a form of construction, existential enactment, or 'standing in' for the author. (Czarniawska 2004a, 60–61.)

In practice, all three methods of analysis are usually present simultaneously (and often unconsciously) and contain a number challenges. Explication, or a summary that is supposed to be free of interpretation, is inevitably an interpretation of what is central to the overall narrative. Similarly, explanation comes with its own challenges, such as choosing between particular modes of explanation: subjectivist explanation, objectivist explanation, or constructivist explanation. While *subjectivist explanations* generally focus on the perceived intentions of the author(s), *objectivist explanations* often emphasise 'external structures', such as class, power relationships, gender, or specific historical circumstances. Objectivist explanations generally represent a form of 'dialectical criticism', the dialectics of appearance and essence. *Constructivist explanations*, on the other hand, are based on the view that the meaning of the text is constructed anew in interaction, thus gaining different meanings in different contexts. The process itself becomes more important than the original product. Finally, exploration, the third element of the hermeneutic triad, can be challenging due to its creativity, the task of revealing and constructing one's identity through the work. (Czarniawska 2004a, 61–72.)

The impossibility of somehow stepping outside of interpretation and personal knowledge and experience base has encouraged me to combine and 'reshuffle' these elements in the following way. The first part of the analysis, chapter four, will first use *the combination of explication* (what) *and subjective explanation* (how / why) in order to understand the various problems, methods, and goals embodied in the Transition model. These are crucial for the subsequent analysis of the Transition politics of resistance. This part of the analysis resembles, and is indeed informed by, forms of

narrative analysis, *frame analysis*, and the organisation of the data into thematic or *substantive categories*. Narrative analysis is reflected in the way that the overall Transition approach is presented in narrative form (i.e. that first there is a particular state of affairs, then the Transition movement comes along, and the end result is an improved state of affairs). This choice is based on two things: the Transition approach appears to be presented as a narrative in the research material and the members of Transition Network place a significant emphasis on creating “new stories and myths” as a method of change (see e.g. Principles 2014; Hopkins 2011, 77).

The use of frame analysis, on the other hand, refers here to a form of qualitative text analysis that follows fairly directly from the theory of framing by David Snow and Robert Benford (1988; see also Benford & Snow 2000; Snow & Byrd 2007). According to Snow and Benford, social movements construct *collective action frames*, understood as persuasively articulated *action-oriented sets of shared beliefs and meanings* that aim to motivate and legitimate action (Benford & Snow 2000, 614). These can also be viewed as movement-specific ideologies that are dynamic and link together slices of history, religious or ideological beliefs, ideas of justice and particular events (Snow & Byrd 2007, 130–131). The success of social movements’ framing activities generally requires the fulfilment of three core framing tasks which include *diagnostic framing*, *prognostic framing*, and *motivational framing*. Diagnostic framing refers to the identification of some aspect of life as an unbearable problem and the assignment of blame or causality. Prognostic framing, on the other hand, refers to the articulation of solutions and the methods or strategies through which to achieve them. Finally, motivational framing – which is not however considered explicitly in this thesis – signifies the calls to action that are meant to motivate people to move ‘from the balcony to the barricades’. (Snow & Benford 1988, 200–202; Benford & Snow 2000, 616–617; Snow & Byrd 2007, 126–128.) The explication and subjective explanation of the Transition approach follows the logic of frame analysis in that it first examines the ‘diagnosis’ of problems and then the ‘prognosis’ of strategies and solutions. These are placed, and indeed complement, the overall narrative framework.

Finally, the organisation of the data into particular headings and subheadings in chapter four is based on the above-mentioned use of thematic, substantive categories. This means that the categories “are mainly *descriptive*, in a broad sense that includes description of participants’ concepts and beliefs; they stay close to the data categorised, and don’t inherently imply a more abstract theory” (Maxwell 2012, 112). All of these elements form the basis of subsequent conceptualisations of the Transition form of politics of resistance.

After this initial empirical analysis, chapter five enters the realm of 'objectivist explanation' (Czarniawska 2004a, 65–67) where the analysis is translated into more 'theoretical categories' (Maxwell 2012, 113). This means that the Transition approach established in chapter four is now placed in a more explicitly theoretical context, meaning that it is interpreted through the theoretical framework of this thesis, using categories that reflect the relevant theoretical concepts (thus making an interpretation of the initial interpretation). Finally, chapter six is an attempt to step outside of the dominant logico-scientific form of knowledge and writing and into the realm of personal exploration and reflection by presenting a personal narrative. This section also functions as a critical self-reflection of the research process and my role in it. Table 1 recounts the key methods and research questions relating to these three core chapters.

	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
Key methods	Explication (what), Subjectivist Explanation (how / why)	Objectivist Explanation (how)	Exploration (researcher's identity and experience), Constructivist Explanation (interaction between researcher and text; research process)
	Narrative analysis, frame analysis. Substantive categories	Theoretical categories	Personal narrative
Research questions	What are the core criticisms, strategies and solutions embodied in the Transition narrative?	How is the Transition movement a form of politics of resistance and how can this case study help to advance IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance?	How does my own identity and positionality interact with the research?

Table 1: Outline of methods, research questions and key findings and insights of chapters four, five and six.

To be clear, the terms 'explaining' and 'understanding' are not to be equated with the traditional understanding of these terms within IR methodology and the classic third / fourth debate within our discipline²². Popularised most notably by Hollis and Smith (1990), *explaining* in IR terminology of methodology has generally been associated with positivist, empiricist, and rationalist approaches that consciously imitate the natural sciences in an effort to discover general causes. In contrast, *understanding* has been associated with interpretive, hermeneutic approaches that seek to reveal the

22 In the classic narrative of the 'great debates' taught to IR undergraduates across the world, the first debate took place from the interwar to early postwar years between idealists and realists over the role of international institutions and the possibility of preventing wars; the second debate from the 1960s onwards between the traditionalists (humanists) and the modernisers (behaviouralists) over methodology; the third debate (although not all accounts include this one) in 1970s and 1980s between realist, pluralist, and Marxist perspectives over the processes and nature of international politics; and finally, since the 1980s, between the so called rationalists and reflectivists over meta-theoretical questions. (See e.g. Kurki & Wight 2013, 16–24.)

intersubjective meanings, reasons and beliefs of particular actors and behaviours. (See e.g. Wendt 1998, 101–102; Adler 2002, 105; Suganami 2008, 344; Kurki & Wight 2013, 20.) If this conceptual dichotomy between explaining and understanding is accepted, the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives of this thesis clearly situate this work in the reflectivist, hermeneutic camp of understanding.²³ However, it seems that the main function of sustaining this dichotomy has been to legitimise the former as 'proper science' and delegitimise and marginalise the latter as essentially 'non-science' (Wendt 1998, 102). The result has arguably been “the impoverishment of our collective efforts” to make sense of the world (ibid.).

Therefore, it has been a conscious decision of mine to use both terms intermittently (demonstrated for example by the title of chapter four: Explication and subjective explanation: Understanding the Transition narrative). After all, “[t]he standard dictionary meaning of the verb, 'to explain', is 'to make plain' or 'to render more intelligible’”, thus making something more *understandable* (Suganami 2008, 329–330). In this view, the two terms are intertwined: understanding is a prerequisite for explaining something. This is the logic that informs the structure and terminology of this thesis (besides the fact that 'explanation' is the original term used in the hermeneutic triad – a contradiction in terms if the IR dichotomy of explaining and understanding is accepted). Similarly, the terms subjectivist, objectivist and constructivist explanation do not refer so much to the properties of the researcher – i.e. being subjective or objective in the analysis – but rather to the focus of the analysis. Subjectivist explanation focuses on the authors and the material, objectivist explanation to the structures and theories, and constructivist to the research process itself. Together these constitute a sympathetic, yet critical and self-reflective work that aims to neither idealise nor undermine its subject matter.

3.3. Primary research material: The publications of the Transition Network

The primary research material used in this thesis consist of a number of documents and publications produced by the members of the Transition Network. The most prominent of these are the fairly information-intensive Transition Network website (home page: <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>) and the related REconomy website (<http://www.reconomy.org/>), the 50-page document *Transition Initiatives Primer* (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008), and the key books *The Transition Handbook*

²³ The valorisation of scientific rationality inherent in the positivist, empiricist methodologies of 'explaining', including the use of reductionist methodologies that ignore complex interactions between things (Paterson 2001, 50–51) goes against the very fibre of this thesis.

(Hopkins 2008) and the *The Transition Companion* (Hopkins 2011).

The websites and the Primer are important, because they are, in effect, the heart of the movement network; the Transition Network website is the place where the various local movements register themselves as part of the wider Transition movement; where they are provided with information, assistance, support and a forum for the exchange of ideas. This is also the site of several personal blogs, which are also referred to in instances where they have been particularly enlightening. The REconomy website is important, because it is a more direct source to the economic problems and solutions advocated by the Transition approach. A 'careful read' of the Primer, on the other hand, is the first requirement for any group that wishes to call themselves a Transition x (a region / town / village / suburb / neighbourhood), thus making it a key document for the movement. Similarly, the two books – the content of which is also present throughout the Transition Network website – can also be viewed as key materials that explain the Transition approach to both prospective participants and wider audiences. Even though they have been written from the particular experience base of the movement founder and the Transition Network, they are nonetheless invaluable for determining the core uniting principles – the problems, strategies and solutions (the key issues relating to the politics of resistance) – of the broader Transition approach.

4. EXPLICATION AND SUBJECTIVE EXPLANATION: UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION NARRATIVE

This chapter constitutes the empirical, qualitative analysis of the Transition narrative, utilising the methodological tools presented in the previous chapter. It is already clear that the Transition movement's grand narrative, its rationale for action, is one where multiple crises are viewed and represented as opportunities to create something positive, “something extraordinary” out of a bad situation (What 2014)²⁴. The longer explanation of this view is that there are recognisable, indisputable, and urgent – environmental, energy and economic – problems that have to be solved. Governments are viewed as *not doing* enough and individual actions as *not being* enough, so the solution is that communities, with the local Transition movements as leaders and facilitators, take matters in their own hands and begin the 'descent' to localisation and greater 'resilience' (What is a

²⁴ See also Hopkins (2011, 74): “In Transition, we take the issues that feel poisonous, which are distressing and potentially catastrophic – peak oil, climate change, economic contraction – but we view them as possibilities, as opportunities.”

Transition Initiative? 2014). A core element of this narrative is that this is not a path of doom and gloom, but one of positive participation and experimentation. However, the details of what all of this – peak oil, climate change, economic issues, transition, localisation, resilience – is perceived to mean is far from straightforward. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to take a closer look at the narrative and its implications; the content and the meanings that the authors of the Transition Network attribute to each of the problems (the original state of affairs) and their solutions (the change to another state of affairs). In other words, this chapter lays out the basic outlines of what it is that the movement resists or challenges (the problems) and the core methods and solutions embodied in the Transition narrative. A more thorough analysis of their 'politics of resistance' will follow in the subsequent chapter.

4.1. In the beginning...

4.1.1. The explicit: The “twin issues” of peak oil and climate change

The Transition Initiatives Primer (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008) is perhaps the most useful starting point due to its continuing role as 'required reading' for any group that wishes to become an 'official' Transition Initiative (see Becoming official 2014). Although somewhat outdated, having been finalised in 2008, it can nonetheless be viewed as a key document for the entire movement. The introduction (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 3) describes how the “twin pressures of Peak Oil and Climate Change” have inspired several communities in the UK, Ireland and elsewhere to take “an integrated and inclusive approach to reduce their carbon footprint and increase their ability to withstand the fundamental shift that will accompany Peak Oil”. What this also translates to is a transition to “a lower energy future [to combat climate change] and to greater levels of community resilience [to combat peak oil]” (ibid.). These are essentially the 'hard core' of the movement, the first part of the movement slogan which also includes the solutions of resilience and relocalisation.

In the next section of the Primer, the authors take the task of explaining in further detail why Transition initiatives are necessary. They emphasise the importance of climate change and peak oil as “[t]he two toughest challenges facing humankind at the start of this 21st century” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 3). Due to the authors' view of climate change as a well-known phenomenon, the section concentrates on the concept of peak oil which is described as “heralding the era of ever-declining fossil fuel availability [which] may well challenge the economic and social stability that is

essential if we are to mitigate the threats posed by Climate Change” (ibid.). The Transition initiatives are presented as “the most promising way of engaging people and communities to take *the far-reaching actions* that are required to mitigate the effects of Peak oil and Climate Change” (op. cit., 4, emphasis added).

The following section goes deeper into the question of peak oil and recounts how, from the 1900s onwards, plentiful oil has enabled 'a coal-based industrialised society' to hugely intensify its so called development (the authors themselves explicitly question the idea of development in this context). It is described how year after year, with more and more oil available, society has “increased its complexity, its mechanisation, its globalised interconnectedness and its energy consumption levels” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 4). Peak oil creates a problem for the survival of this way of life, because it refers to

the end of cheap and plentiful oil, the recognition that the ever increasing volumes of oil being pumped into our economies will peak and then inexorably decline. It's about understanding how our industrial way of life is absolutely dependent on this ever-increasing supply of cheap oil. (Ibid.)

The authors go to great lengths to repeatedly emphasise that peak oil is not about running out of oil *per se*, but about being “close to running out of easy-to-get, cheap oil” which means that there will be an “energy decline – that extended period when, year on year, we have decreasing amounts of oil to fuel our industrialised way of life” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 5, emphasis in the original). The theory of peak oil and all its associated consequences, which are essentially presented as indisputable facts, are based on past observations of oil field depletion patterns and contemporary research by “a growing body of independent oil experts and oil geologists [who] have calculated that the peak will occur between 2006 and 2012” (ibid.). In essence, the effects of peak oil are portrayed as nothing short of disastrous²⁵, but no concrete examples are discussed. The overall message is nonetheless emphasised by several references to various experts, such as a number of oil authors, former oil company representatives, and politicians²⁶, who all seem to confirm the peak oil predictions and their severity in some way or another. (Op. cit., 5–6.)

As the 'disastrous effects' of peak oil are not made explicit in the Transition Initiatives Primer, it seems necessary to examine other key material. A look at the Transition Network website reveals that neither climate change or peak oil are elaborated on in very much detail. Climate change is

25 Some examples include: “Peak Oil [...] may well challenge [...] economic and social stability” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 3); “The problems start when we’ve extracted around half of the recoverable oil. [...] At this point, oil supply plateaus and then declines, with massive ramifications for industrialised societies.” (Op. cit., 4.) “It’s difficult to overstate what this means to our lives in the developed countries” (op. cit. 5).

26 The relationship to politics is an intriguing aspect that will be discussed further in section 4.1.5.

treated as a rather common sense, self-evident phenomenon, and is introduced through highly detailed, scientific figures²⁷. Peak oil, on the other hand, is represented as heralding “the Age of Unaffordable Energy (2008-?)” which means that “we are increasingly at risk, economically and socially” (Why 2014). It is also associated with a problem of 'oil addiction' and, again, “a way of life which is dependent on easy access to fossil fuels” (ibid.). The practical effects are, in other words, again left to the imagination. However, Hopkins' (2008, 2011) books provide some insight:

When peak oil is dropped into the mix, localisation is no longer a choice – it is the inevitable direction in which we are moving, one we can do nothing about, other than to decide whether we want to embrace its possibilities or cling to what we perceive that we are about to lose. [...] The principal reason for this is transportation. [...] In 2004, 74% of petroleum products were used for transportation, and figures for the following year show that nearly all (98.8%) of energy consumed by the transport sector was petroleum. (Hopkins 2008, Chapter 4: Why small is inevitable?, section “Relocalisation”.)

To recap, given that our current globalised/centralised supply systems are entirely dependent on cheap liquid fossil fuels, and the uninterrupted supply of those fuels and their continuing cheapness are increasingly in doubt, we need to focus on the creation of local production systems. (Hopkins 2008, Chapter 4: Why small is inevitable?, section “Relocalisation”.)

[T]he price volatility of oil will inevitably begin to reverse the assumptions that underpin the economics of globalisation” (Hopkins 2011, 47).

In other words, the core argument seems to be that peak oil will translate to such increases and changes in the price of oil that long-distance supply chains will become not only environmentally, but financially, unviable. Although the economic and social risks are not spelt out, this seems to refer, first and foremost, to situations where, for example, long supply chains are interrupted due to 'oil shocks' or extreme climate conditions and therefore supermarkets actually run out food and other necessary items, thus causing widespread panic and chaos²⁸. Another suggestion seems to be that prices of various everyday items become so high (due to the role of oil in their production and distribution) that large numbers of people can no longer afford to meet their basic needs. It seems reasonable to interpret that these scenarios (which may of course take place simultaneously) are at the base of the suggested 'unprecedented' economic, social and political threats contained in the idea of peak oil.

27 “We must leave 2,795 gigatons of CO₂ in the ground. This is about 80% of what remains. We can release only 20.2%, or 565 gigatons, of the remaining CO₂ into the atmosphere.” (Why 2014.)

28 This is supported, for example, by the following experience in the UK when, in September 2000, protesters blocked the English Channel:

“Enormous lines appeared at gas stations as panic buying spread across the country on day 4;

Over half of Britain's gas stations were closed by day 6, 90% by day 9;

Food stores experienced the same wave of panic buying, forcing supermarkets to close or impose rationing;

Hospitals suspended all but emergency care and began to run out of blood and essential supplies;

Mail delivery and public transportation operated on reduced schedules;

Heavy industries — auto manufacturers, steel plants, aerospace plants and the like — began planning immediate cutbacks, layoffs and closures as they ran short of fuel, parts, raw materials and workers who could get to work.”

(Transition Voice blog entry 07.08.2013.)

4.1.2. *Underlying causes and effects: Socio-cultural considerations*

Although peak oil and climate change represent the most explicit part of the Transition rationale, other related concerns are also clearly present. The role of socio-cultural²⁹ and economic issues are arguably more pronounced in the current content of the Transition Network website than in the 2008 Transition Initiatives Primer, but even in the Primer, these questions are incorporated under the theme of 'the wider context of Transition'. The core issue here is that

along with these community-based transitions, each individual needs to evolve away from addiction to oil and a whole raft of ecologically devastating practices, away from the complex web that locks them into the *endless growth paradigm* (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 31, emphasis added).

[...]

This journey involves fully feeling the unbearable weight of accountability for what's happening, the complicity we all have in supporting this unsustainable paradigm (ibid.).

This clearly seems to enter the realm of 'causes' – what are some of the core background factors that have brought us to the present predicament and are making any kind of meaningful change extremely hard. It seems reasonable to deduce that this threefold reference to 'oil addiction' (a theme that is repeated throughout the publications of the Transition Network), 'a whole raft of ecologically devastating practices', and 'the endless growth paradigm' clearly refer, in the context of ordinary people, to the highly prevalent individualistic and materialistic value orientations and lifestyles that, at least in West, most people have become to consider as a normal way of life. Indeed, it is considered normal that people not only own their own sets of everything (cars, houses, tools, computers, appliances, and so forth), but they also own vast *amounts* of everything and these things are also frequently thrown away so that new, more fashionable or 'upgraded' versions can take their place³⁰. This certainly creates massive problems related to, for example, carbon emissions, resource depletion and waste disposal. Overall, this idea that the Western way of life (both cultural and social manifestations) is, in fact, at the centre of what the Transition approach is essentially challenging is supported also by other references and criticisms of “this unviable way of living” (What is a Transition Initiative? 2014), “the throwaway society” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 26), and “the atomised, disconnected unsustainable and inequitable society that we've grown into” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 13).

29 To be clear, cultural issues are here understood as those dealing with commonly shared mental aspects (beliefs, meanings, and the like) whereas social issues are understood as the practical, physical manifestations of these mental aspects as well as other, more structural features (see Maxwell 2012, 25). The term 'socio-cultural' thus incorporates both aspects.

30 Of course, a lot of things are nowadays designed with built-in obsolescence, meaning that they invariably have a short or limited lifespan – arguably another feature of the 'growth paradigm'.

Furthermore, the continual references to the way in which Transition initiatives are making people happier as well as “creating happier, fairer and stronger communities” (What is a Transition Initiative? 2014), strikes as a clear indication of the perception that the individualistic and materialistic values and practices are threatening wellbeing and happiness in contemporary (Western) societies. This is supported by countless other references, such as “these relocalisation efforts are designed to result in a life that is more fulfilling, more socially connected and more equitable” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 4); “[w]hen we use the term 'Transition' we’re talking about the changes we need to make to get to a low-carbon, socially-just, healthier and happier future” (Transition Network's Draft Strategy 2014). Thus, the underlying diagnosis of socio-cultural problems seems to work on two levels (causes and consequences), both of which create their own, interrelated sets of issues.

In addition, before delving into the economic dimensions of the 'endless growth paradigm', another cultural aspect deserves attention – that of anthropocentrism. Although not usually expressed explicitly³¹, a criticism of anthropocentrism is clearly prevalent in the Transition narrative. It is evident, for example, in the statement that “[t]he challenges we face are not just caused by a mistake in our technologies but as a direct result of our world view and belief system” (Principles 2014; see also Hopkins 2011, 78). The fact that 'world view' is presented as a singular and is coming from what is, at its core, an environmental movement, seems to indicate that this is indeed a reference to anthropocentrism, the view that humans are the most central or the most significant entities in the world. This is also supported by the following:

[E]ach of us needs to travel closer to a heartfelt understanding that if we want to stay living on Earth, we'll have to weave ourselves back into the fabric of the planet, and comprehend that the “humans are separate from the earth” duality underpinning our industrialised societies is false, misleading and a one-way ticket to hell on earth far hotter than we can handle. (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 31.

If we are to transition to fundamentally different physical systems for living we will need a fundamentally different way of understanding the world. Changing our worldview from separate to interconnected, from scarcity thinking to enough for all, from competitive to collaborative, all form part of the Inner Transition landscape. (About Inner Transition 2014.)

The question of human-nature duality – the separation of humans and nature – which is arguably a core feature of anthropocentrism and scientific rationality (for the latter, see Paterson 2001, 50–51), thus emerges as yet another source of resistance.

31 One exception is the Transition Initiatives Primer's section on movies that help to reconnect people to nature where it is stated that “[t]hese movies [...] help overcome the dominant anthropocentric view of this planet” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 40.

4.1.3. *Underlying causes and effects: (Socio-)Economic considerations*

To return to the question of an unsustainable 'growth paradigm' expressed in the previous section, the thought also presents itself within the context of economic structures. It is repeated, among other things, in the Transition Network website where the core rationales for 'doing Transition' beyond climate change and oil addiction are a “skewed economy” and the “Myth of Endless Expansion” (Why 2014). The reason for characterising the economy as 'skewed' is based on the considerable dominance of large chains and the minority status of 'independent businesses'. The latter kind is considered infinitely better because they “create more jobs, better health, wellbeing and social justice” and “keep the money we spend circulating in our local economy”³² (Why 2014). Although these views are expressed as being based on independent research, such statements seem at first glance somewhat controversial. Certainly there is no guarantee that independent businesses as such are automatically the beacons of wellbeing and social justice. This aspect becomes clearer, however, when examining the *kind* of businesses – social, cooperative enterprises (discussed in further detail under the section on solutions) – the Transition Network actually promotes (see e.g. The New Economy in 20 Enterprises 2013). The 'myth of endless expansion', on the other hand, refers to “a flawed financial system” that only focuses on monetary growth rather than, again, “community, wellbeing, social justice and resilience (the ability to respond and adapt to the unexpected)” (Why 2014).

Certainly it is clear from these statements that the current economic and financial system is considered to be a core problem that is detrimental to the much repeated values of community, wellbeing, social justice, and resilience. It is also seen to relate to the consequent problems of “economic inequalities” and “economic hardship” (What is a Transition Initiative? 2014), as well as “economic fragility” (Policies for Transition 2014). However, much of the Transition Network website and the related publications seem to avoid any thorough analyses of problems (for an exception, see e.g. Miller & Hopkins 2013). This seems to be a conscious part of their approach which involves focusing on positive *solutions* rather than the underlying problems:

Transition initiatives are based on creating clear and practical visions of a community to help it reduce or lose its dependence on fossil fuels. The primary focus is on practical possibilities and opportunities rather than on campaigning against current problems. (Hopkins 2011, 77; see also Principles 2014.)

32 This same sentiment that money spent in local enterprises tends to be re-spent in the local economy (in wages, local suppliers, accounting, distribution, cleaning, marketing, insurance, and so forth) while money spent in large chains tends to end up, with the exception of wages, in distant locations, is repeated in various places and documents, such as “The New Economy in 20 Enterprises” (2013).

Nevertheless, the Transition Network's 'REconomy project' shines more light on the economic dimension. This is one of the few places where things are laid out in more direct language (instead of the common use of euphemisms). Indeed, in their section on “Understanding economics & new economics” (2014), they first define the meaning of an economic system as “the system of producing and distributing of goods and services and allocating resources in a society” which includes a great number of actors, including consumers. They then go on to describe the present situation as follows:

[T]oday the dominant form of economic organization at the global level is based on capitalist market-oriented mixed economies. This is characterised by promotion of high consumption rates, aided by short product lifetimes, built-in obsolescence (so you need to buy new versions/models), fast-changing fashions and throw-away culture. It assumes the earth has unlimited resources as inputs, and an unlimited ‘sink’ for receiving waste outputs. (Understanding economics & new economics 2014.)

The problems inherent in this form are expressed to relate particularly (but not exclusively) to the paradox of the economy, energy and the environment – namely, that the capitalist, market-oriented economic systems, which are based on infinite economic growth, depend on ever greater amounts of finite natural resources. In other words, the 'healthier' the economy is (meaning the more it grows), the unhealthier are its sources of growth. Other problematic features mentioned are the ever-increasing amounts of debt and inequality, as well as the use of gross domestic product (GDP) as the measurement of growth and wellbeing. (Understanding economics & new economics 2014; see also related links on this website.) In a similar fashion, the Post Carbon Institute's and the Transition Networks co-produced report by Miller and Hopkins (2013) characterises the present system as “the sinking ship of globalized, fossil-fuelled, inequitable, growth-based economy”. It is certainly clear that the global form of economic organization is at the core of what the Transition ideology resists and it does so on the back of the perceived ecological, social, and economic consequences.

To clarify further, the perceived *socio-economic* consequences of such an economic system seem to revolve around the questions of economic inequalities and economic hardship or instability. The frequent references to debt, inequality and providing jobs and livelihoods (see e.g. Social enterprise and entrepreneurship 2014) certainly resonate with the increasingly precarious nature of financial stability in a highly globalised and mechanised world. For the Transition key figure, the effects of such a world are nothing short of a crisis of civilisation:

Imagine the day when you can do all your week's shopping without ever speaking to anyone.

Something is lost, something as fundamental to our wellbeing as being able to hear the birdsong on a Spring morning. As hearing the sound of children playing. Civility, community, humanity, all start to unravel. (Hopkins blog entry 10.04.2014.)

4.1.4. Economic growth in further detail

Since the issue of growth in particular – understood as the aforementioned “monetary growth within a flawed financial system” (Why 2014) – is such a central feature of the Transition approach, I decided that it needs to be explored in further detail as an issue of its own. It is clearly considered to ‘imperil’ core Transition values, such as “community, wellbeing, social justice and resilience” (Why 2014), but it is hardly elaborated on in much details. A key question that should perhaps be attended to is why is growth such a crucial goal of national and global policies? Although the Transition documents say very little about this, academics writing on the topic of *degrowth* provide some answers. Essentially, the political vision of growth as the key to societal and global wellbeing appears to be based on a neoclassical economic ideology (Spangenberg 2010, 561–563) which advocates a thoroughly materialistic understanding of human well-being³³. It also assumes that even though production in a microeconomic (individual household or company) level has a point where further growth in production will have more costs than benefits, no such ‘optimal scale’ exists at the macroeconomic level (economy as a whole). As a consequence, as much economic growth as possible is promoted as the standard of institutional success as well as societal progress and well-being. (Alexander 2012, 352–353.)

Similarly, GDP accounting – created in the aftermath of the 1930s Great Depression and World War II and now the standard macroeconomic way of measuring growth³⁴ – is based on the neoclassical view that a value of a thing (be it an item, such as a potato, or a service, such as legal representation) is contained only in its market price and therefore all non-monetary activities and various ecological, social and political side-effects are excluded from it. (Alexander 2012, 352–353.) The dominance of GDP in public policy has also been strengthened, for example, by the so called ‘Okun’s law’ found in most macroeconomic textbooks. According to it, the rate of unemployment is directly related to the growth rate of GDP and an annual growth rate of two to

33 Within this framework, human well-being within a given society is seen as directly linked to the size of the economy and the degree of personal choice in market transactions (Alexander 2012, 352–353).

34 In practice, GDP can be seen as “the market value of all final goods and services produced within a country during a given period of time” (Mankiw 2008, 510, in Alexander 2012, 351) and it can be calculated, for example, by the adding up the “total of all expenditures made in consuming the finished goods and services” (Jackson 2002, 99, in Alexander 2012, 351).

three percent is required in order to keep unemployment from rising. Degrowth proponents note, however, that although this may hold true in the present system, alternative employment structures and policies that reduce average working hours while maintaining a decent standard of living would have the capability to maintain high levels of employment also in a degrowth system. (Eriksson and Andersson 2010, 133.)

In addition, there are also other factors that are seen to contribute to the contemporary obsession with growth and hinder any fundamental change. For example, Eriksson and Andersson (2010, 125) argue that the modern 'growthmania' is driven by the drive for profit-centered growth (a core feature of capitalism), the competition between collective actors, especially nation-states, and the competition for status between affluent individuals. They thus locate the continuation of growth-centred policies primarily within three realms – the capitalist economic system, the state system, and the cultural sphere. In a somewhat similar vein, van Griethuysen (2010, 590–595) explains how the dominance of economic growth over social and ecological considerations is based on the fundamental institutions of capitalism, especially the principle of private property and property expansion which intertwine with particular cultural expectations. These views are supported by countless others who emphasise the way in which growth is a *structural feature of capitalism* – a system of “grow or die” (Kallis 2011, 875). On the other hand, Spangenberg (2010) and Alexander (2012) also emphasise the mere strength of the *growth discourse* itself which has come to represent economic growth as the key to nearly all national, regional and global problems whether economic, political, social, or even ecological in nature.

These arguments are more or less weaved together in Trainer's (2012) outline of some of the key issues related to growth. The first of these is the logic of modern banking and interest payments, which depend on economic growth; “[i]f more has to be paid back than was lent or invested, then the total amount of capital to invest will inevitably grow over time” (Trainer 2012, 592), otherwise the result is – as evidenced – ever-increasing amounts of debt. Related to the first point, this means that in a degrowth system “almost the entire finance industry has to be scrapped, and replaced by arrangements whereby money is made available, lent, invested etc., without increasing the wealth of the lender” (Trainer 2012, 593). Furthermore, removing the growth imperative means that the quest to get richer should somehow be replaced by “a collective effort to work out what society needs, and organise to produce and develop those things” (ibid.). Trainer also argues that there could be no concept of (surplus) profit and accumulation, as the problem of inequality would become even more acute than it already is. Without growth, there could also be no market system which is essentially

about maximising wealth and profit. Finally, the removal of growth would require removing the (Western) cultural quest “to get richer, to accumulate wealth and property” (ibid.). What these various discussions seem to agree on is that challenging ideas and practices surrounding growth is a highly radical and comprehensive project, much more so than what initially comes across in the Transition documents. Sections 4.3.1. (Economic shift towards localisation and the spread of cooperative forms of production) and 5.2.2. (Capitalism, scientific rationality and the values of modern masculinity) will return to these thoughts.

4.1.5. The question of political inaction

Understanding the problems, the sources of resistance, that the Transition movement challenges is certainly not complete without some regard for the political dimension. In terms of national and international politics, the research material portrays a rather ambivalent position. On the one hand, state actors are criticised and blamed as not doing anything remotely meaningful to solve the problems, evident in comments such as “apart from a few notable exceptions, national leaders are not stepping up to address these problems in any meaningful way”³⁵ (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 6); and

[a]ll industrialised countries appear to operate on the assumption that our high levels of energy consumption, our high carbon emissions, and our massive environmental impact can go on indefinitely (What is a Transition Initiative? 2014, emphasis added).

Similarly, statements such as “any rational examination [...] tells us this can't go on much longer” (ibid.) implies that political decision-makers are, in fact, behaving irrationally. There is also a clear view that governments are aware of the likelihood and impact of peak oil and are *purposefully* covering up the information³⁶. On the other hand, however, the very same (irrational and deceitful) state actors are also simultaneously placed at the very centre of the solution by stating that “Transition Initiatives complement [...] [global and national] schemes by making sure that the changes they demand in the way we live our day-to-day lives can actually be put into practice at ground level” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 7). The overall principle of non-confrontational, constructive action also creates a somewhat confusing image that the movement is not in any way political.

35 See also: “We could dither about, waiting for technology or governments to solve the problem for us. However, general consensus now appears to be that this is a rather high risk option.” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 7.)

36 See e.g.: “This report [...] [was] buried by the US administration for close to a year. A perusal of the far-reaching implications of the report give a clear indication why the government was so keen to keep it out of the public domain.” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 6.)

However, this aspect of non-confrontation appears to be partly a matter of 'operating below the radar' (see Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 22) in order to avoid negative interference in Transition activities. It also seems to reflect an acceptance that the state and its related strands and agencies are here to stay and practical solutions to what is being viewed as extremely urgent environmental and energy concerns also require state and other official action – taking an oppositional approach may hinder rather than help this process³⁷. Meaningful political action by the state (in this case, most parliamentary democracies) is also viewed as unlikely as long as people's day-to-day lives support individualistic, materialistic and growth-oriented socio-cultural and economic orientations (see e.g. Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 7) and thus the emphasis is on changing these at grassroots level rather than appealing to (or protesting 'against') states to force such changes from above.³⁸

Furthermore, from the point of view of appealing to wider audiences, it seems likely that a part of the avoidance of 'politics' within the movement language relates to two parallel aspects. On the one hand, there is a widespread disillusionment with the politics of states and parties (see e.g. Dalton 2004; Felicetti 2014), the usual understanding of the meaning of politics. Frustration with national and international politics is indeed also evident, despite the apparent efforts to remain non-confrontational and optimistic³⁹. On the other hand, there are also those who remain 'good citizens', voters and supporters of parliamentary democracies and whose support is crucial for successful relocalisation efforts⁴⁰ – explicit opposition to states and parties would undoubtedly alienate such sections of the population (the majority in many places). Maintaining a non-political image may thus cater for both types of audiences.

Despite the ambivalence and the self-proclaimed non-confrontational nature of the movement, it

37 This is evident also in discussions concerning local governments, for example: “Whatever the degree of groundswell your Transition Initiative manages to generate, however many practical projects you’ve initiated and however wonderful your Energy Descent Plan is, you will not progress too far unless you have cultivated a positive and productive relationship with your local authority. Whether it is planning issues, funding or providing connections, you need them on board.” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 7.)

38 This is also supported by comments, such as these: “Governments generally don't lead, they respond. They are reactive, not proactive. It is essential that we remember that many of the decisions they will inevitably have to make as part of preparing for Powerdown are perceived to be pretty much inconceivable from an electoral perspective.” (Hopkins 2008, Chapter 4: Why small is inevitable, section “Where does government fit in?”); “Politically, Transition is increasingly creating a culture where currently unelectable policies can become electable” (Hopkins 2011, 53).

39 See e.g. the blog post by Transition Network member Sophie Banks: “We also spoke about how we manage our responses in order to go on living. I could let myself feel how much anger I have at the destructive behaviour of our politicians and business 'leaders' that I just don't get in touch with – if I let all the anger through and tried to act on it I would burn out really fast.” (Banks blog entry 21.03.2014.)

40 See e.g.: “Successful Transition Initiatives will need an unprecedented coming together of society” and therefore “there is no room for 'them and us' thinking” (Hopkins 2011, 78; see also Principles 2014).

seems incorrect to claim that the Transition ideology is not in any way political. As argued by Hardt, “Transition's choice of practical, place-based forms and commitments is an ethical-political one, based on the state's failure to meet crises of our times, and it has political effects” (2013, 4). For her, the political effects and implications rise particularly from the way that the movement modifies common understandings of “community, economy, citizenship, and democracy” (Hardt 2013, 123). Indeed, I would also argue that challenging what is considered normal is an ultimate form of politics and the political. As suggested by Rancière (1999, 28), the mainstream politics of bureaucracies, elections, shifting power relations within the state and the economy, and the procedures and justifications for such shifts could more accurately be called as *the police* (see also May 2007, 23). *Politics*, on the other hand, should be reserved for

whatever breaks with the tangible configuration... Political activity is whatever shifts a body from the place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise. (Rancière 1999, 29–30.)

Although one must be careful not to over idealise the impact of the Transition initiatives, the attempted shifts towards more collectivist values, community-based subjectivities, and cooperative forms of labour (discussed further in subsequent sections) indeed strike as some highly political activities that disrupt common ideas and discourses of 'normal'.⁴¹ Thus, the movement is certainly political and implicitly calls into question the workings of national and global politics, even though it does not explicitly 'oppose' them.

4.1.6. Drawing the threads together: Dominant economic and socio-cultural structures and state inaction as the core targets of resistance

This section functions as a summary of the various threads and thus as a further elaboration into the question of what is being 'resisted'. It seems that there are multiple levels of analysis into the questions of cause and effect. The image that emerges from the whole is that the underlying problems, the perceived causes, concern some of key aspects of Western modernity: the globalised, 'fossil-fuelled' and growth-based (capitalist) economic system and its mutually dependent relationship to the individualistic, materialistic and anthropocentric practices, values and worldviews of ordinary people. This relationship has translated to another set of problems, the perceived effects, which include at least ecological (including environmental and energy concerns),

⁴¹ The internal politics of the Transition movement – to the extent that it is possible to discuss them based on the Transition Network documents – will be discussed in later sections.

economic, and socio-cultural dimensions. Ecologically speaking, climate change is the most visible and prominent manifestation of these problems, but by no means the only one. Socio-economically speaking, the loss and precariousness of livelihoods⁴², the ever-increasing amounts of debt, and the gross economic inequalities both within nations as well as globally are considered to be some of the key effects. Finally, from a socio-cultural perspective, it is the increasing lack of wellbeing, cohesion, a sense of community, and intrinsic (or altruistic) values, social justice and equality that are seen as some of the key aspects related to the dominant economic and socio-cultural structures. It seems reasonable to argue that part of the role of peak oil rhetoric is to try and 'force' the desired changes, to motivate even those less concerned about climate change or economic or social wellbeing to the processes of localisation. Therefore, the core sources and targets of resistance are not peak oil and climate change (which are manifestations of deeper issues), but rather the dominant socio-cultural and economic structures prevalent in most of the Western world, complemented and maintained by the lack of action and responsibility on behalf of governments around the world.

4.2. In come the Transition model

4.2.1. The “principles”, “steps”, and “stages”

After delving into the perceived problems, what follows are naturally the strategies and solutions. The key solution offered is “a process of relocalising all essential elements that a community needs to sustain itself and thrive” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 7). The strategy for achieving this involves the Transition initiatives to act as a 'catalyst' for broader community action towards relocalisation⁴³ and the wider realisation that “the future with less oil, and producing less carbon emissions, could be preferable to today” (Hopkins 2011, 72). But beyond such vague outlines, what exactly is the Transition model? The stated principles that are meant to embody the Transition approach include the following:

1. Positive visioning [...].
2. Help people access good information and trust them to make good decisions [...].
3. Inclusion and openness [...].

42 See e.g. “Transition is about creating a new, economically viable local infrastructure that creates livelihoods, skills and resilience” (Social enterprise and entrepreneurship 2014).

43 See also the introduction in Transition Network website: “The aim of Transition is to help you be the catalyst in your community for an historic push to make where you live more resilient, healthier and bursting with strong local livelihoods, while also reducing its ecological footprint” (What 2014). Similarly: “the role of a Transition initiative isn’t to do everything itself – to become a developer, a bank, an energy company, landowner, training organisation and so on. Rather, its work is to catalyse, inspire and support the efforts to make things happen, helping the emergent projects on the ground, as well as to structure itself so that, as much as possible, it enables and supports the people developing those projects.” (Evolving structure 2014.)

4. Enable sharing and networking [...].
5. Build resilience [...].
6. Inner *and* outer Transition [...].
7. Subsidiarity: self-organisation and decision-making at the appropriate level [...]. (Hopkins 2011, 77–78; see also Principles 2014.)

What these principles seem to emphasise is a constructive, practical approach (no 1), decentralised decision-making and diversity (no 2 and 7), efforts at cross-societal cooperation (no 3 and 5), collective resource and knowledge base (no 4), and addressing the psychological aspect of change (no 6). Similarly, Hopkin's (2011, 79) list of Transition 'qualities' also include aspects, such as joyful and constructive, open source, self-organising, and so on. However, although many of these aspects certainly appear to resonate with the overall image of the Transition approach, there seem to be some problems involved. For example, the issue of being 'open source' and collective seems contradictory when the key publications – i.e. the books *The Transition Handbook* (Hopkins 2008), *The Transition Companion* (Hopkins 2011), as well as *The Power of Just Doing Stuff: How local action can change the world* (Hopkins 2013) – are available for purchase on the Transition Network website rather than freely available (although the first two can now be found online as well). Similarly, the training courses that at least two participants of each Transition initiative are supposed to take part in (two core courses, several more voluntary ones) are costly, each course being approximately 100 pounds per person (see *Becoming official*; Courses 2014; Launch 2014). This certainly sheds some doubts over the idea of not seeking profit and having open source, shared, and collective resource and knowledge base. On the other hand, of course, anyone can adopt the ideas of the Transition model without calling it Transition and in that regard it remains decidedly open source. These matters also point to the multifaceted nature of decentralisation. It is interesting how the Transition Network advocates the movement as decentralised when it simultaneously acts as a form of authority with set rules and criteria for the various Transition initiatives (see e.g. *Becoming official* 2014). This aspects will be considered in further detail in the following section on organisational structure.

When it comes to the actual processes involved in Transition activities, the logic goes roughly as follows: First, an initial group of people familiarises themselves with the Transition concept and the issues of concern and then applies them to their local circumstances in an effort to reach out to local people. Second, this group begins awareness raising and relationship-building through various events and activities, such as movie screenings. Third, provided that more people have become interested, various groups are formed that each deal with different aspects of the Transition process, such as food, energy, health, transport, psychology of change, economics and livelihoods, waste,

and so forth. Fourth, each of these groups begin “practical projects such as community supported agriculture, shared transport, local currencies, seed swaps, tool libraries, energy saving clubs, urban orchards, reskilling classes, draught-busting teams” (What is a Transition Initiative? 2014) and so on. As these progress, more people (should ideally) become involved and more possible it becomes to conduct “community-wide visioning processes” (ibid.). The core of such processes is the drafting of an official Energy Descent Action Plan and beginning to rebuild local economies by setting up, for example, “local energy companies, social enterprises, and cooperative food businesses” (ibid.).

When the Transition Initiatives Primer was drawn up, the above process was represented as “The 12 Steps of Transition” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 24). Table 2 below summarises the content of these 12 steps.

Step #	Description
1. Set up a steering group and design its demise from the outset	This stage puts a core team in place to drive the project forward during the initial phases. [...] Ultimately your Steering Group should become made up of 1 representative from each sub-group.
2. Awareness raising	This stage will identify your key allies, build crucial networks and prepare the community in general for the launch of your Transition initiative.
3. Lay the foundations	This stage is about networking with existing groups and activists, making clear to them that the Transition Initiative is designed to incorporate their previous efforts and future inputs by looking at the future in a new way. Acknowledge and honour the work they do, and stress that they have a vital role to play.
4. Organise a Great Unleashing	This stage creates a memorable milestone to mark the project’s “coming of age”, moves it right into the community at large, builds a momentum to propel your initiative forward for the next period of its work and celebrates your community’s desire to take action.
5. Form working groups	Part of the process of developing an Energy Descent Action Plan is tapping into the collective genius of the community. Crucial for this is to set up a number of smaller groups to focus on specific aspects of the process. Each of these groups will develop their own ways of working and their own activities, but will all fall under the umbrella of the project as a whole.
6. Use Open Space	We’ve found Open Space Technology to be a highly effective approach to running meetings for Transition Initiatives.
7. Develop visible practical manifestations of the project	It is essential that you avoid any sense that your project is just a talking shop where people sit around and draw up wish lists. Your project needs, from an early stage, to begin to create practical, high visibility manifestations in your community.
8. Facilitate the Great Reskilling	If we are to respond to Peak Oil and Climate Change by moving to a lower energy future and relocalising our communities, then we’ll need many of the skills that our grandparents took for granted. One of the most useful things a Transition Initiative can do is to reverse the “great deskilling” of the last 40 years by offering training in a range of some of these skills.
9. Build a Bridge to Local Government	Whatever the degree of groundswell your Transition Initiative manages to generate, however many practical projects you’ve initiated and however

	wonderful your Energy Descent Plan is, you will not progress too far unless you have cultivated a positive and productive relationship with your local authority. Whether it is planning issues, funding or providing connections, you need them on board. Contrary to your expectations, you may well find that you are pushing against an open door.
10. Honour the elders	While you clearly want to avoid any sense that what you are advocating is 'going back' or 'returning' to some dim distant past, there is much to be learnt from how things were done, what the invisible connections between the different elements of society were and how daily life was supported. Finding out all of this can be deeply illuminating, and can lead to our feeling much more connected to the place we are developing our Transition Initiatives.
11. Let it go where it wants to go...	Although you may start out developing your Transition Initiative with a clear idea of where it will go, it will inevitably go elsewhere. If you try and hold onto a rigid vision, it will begin to sap your energy and appear to stall. Your role is not to come up with all the answers, but to act as a catalyst for the community to design their own transition.
12. Create an Energy Descent Plan	Each working group will have been focusing on practical actions to increase community resilience and reduce the carbon footprint. Combined, these actions form the Energy Descent Action Plan. That's where the collective genius of the community has designed its own future to take account of the potential threats from Peak Oil and Climate Change.

Table 2: The 12 steps of Transition. Adapted from Brangwyn and Hopkins (2008, 24–28), see also Hopkins 2008, Chapter 11: How to Start a Transition Initiative; and Hopkins 2011, 78–79.

When looking at these 'steps', what clearly seems to emerge as the most important part of the process is the drafting of an 'Energy Descent Action Plan'. This involves investigating the content and extent of local resources (e.g. arable land, health provision, transport options, renewable energy sources, building materials, and so on); creating a vision of the transformed community 15–20 years later; listing a timeline and the steps needed in order to get to this vision; obtaining the official development plan from local authorities (and modifying it accordingly); publicising in all ways possible the new vision of the community and the steps towards it; creating the first draft; and finalising the Energy Descent Plan based on the feedback received (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 30).

However, although the Energy Descent Plan – which strikes as something that will then be handed over to the local authorities – takes centre stage within the 12 steps, the process has since been re-articulated further. The Transition model is now represented in further detail and arguably with more ambition in the Transition Network website and Hopkins' 2011 book *The Transition Companion* as the 'ingredients' and the five 'stages' of Transition (see e.g. Ingredients 2014; Hopkins 2011, 92–289). The stages included are as follows: The first stage, “Starting out”, including issues of organisation, social relations, communication within, scale, positive methods, partnerships, inner aspects, and so on. The second stage, “Deepening”, includes matters such as practical projects,

reskilling, communication with other actors, reflecting, taking care of personal wellbeing, educational pathways, and forth. The third stage, “Connecting” concentrates on ways to “take Transition to a wider audience” (Ingredients 2014) and includes aspects such as working with local councils, local businesses, the elderly, the young, and other Transition initiatives. The fourth stage, “Building”, goes beyond projects and towards concrete changes. It is here that the core idea of the Transition model, as it currently stands, becomes clear:

Transition groups aim ultimately to catalyse the localisation of their local economy. They strive to move from running small community projects to thinking and acting much bigger. New skills and ways of thinking will lead Transition initiatives to become social enterprises, such as becoming developers, banks, energy companies and so on. (Hopkins 2011, 234; Ingredients 2014.)

Indeed, the 'ingredients' in this section include not only the above-mentioned Energy Descent Action Plans, but also forming social (cooperative) enterprises and strategic local infrastructure, using intermediate technologies, catalysing community ownership of assets, and so on. Finally, the fifth stage, “Daring to dream”, relates to scaling up to nation-wide levels, both in terms of government policies and the initiatives themselves. (Ingredients 2014.) While most of the aspects within the building process will be discussed further when examining the actual meaning and content of 'resilience' and 'localisation', some of the core features of the Transition model that can be drawn from the of the whole are the focus of the next two sections.

4.2.2. Questions of organisational structure and strategy

The question of organisational structures, particularly their relationship to hierarchy and decision-making models, is complex and the same applies to the Transition model. Similar to the relationship to national and international politics, the approach to hierarchy comes across as highly ambivalent. On the one hand there is a clear connection to decentralised, horizontal models of organisation, but on the other hand there are also similar tendencies towards traditional hierarchical models. The decentralised, horizontal element is evident, for example, in the above-mentioned principles and qualities of Transition as well as in the way that 'leadership' is conceptualised:

[I]n a well-functioning group, anyone can exercise leadership for a while.

Leadership is about inspiring others, taking initiative and helping a group find a direction that they want to follow. That might entail some or all of the following roles: critical thinker, ideas person, group harmony maintainer, driver, organiser, integrator/chair, external networker.

Leadership doesn't have to be about power over a group, it is about making a group feel empowered. It is not about hierarchy, it is not about "who's boss", it's not about management

and it's not about "followers". In particular, it's not about a permanent label that's applied to an individual. (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 34.)

Similarly, it is evident in the first 'step' of Transition, “[s]et up a steering group and design its demise from the outset” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 24; Hopkins 2008, Chapter 11: How to Start a Transition Initiative; Hopkins 2011, 79) which is based on the idea of shared and changing roles of leadership. This element is also found, for example, in the discussion on “Scaling up”:

Sometimes the people who initially led the smaller group cannot run a larger one. This can be uncomfortable for all involved. As a group grows, there's a tendency for those with the loudest voices to dominate. A hierarchy appears, tending to push power and information upwards and out of the hands of those doing the work, which is where it should be. *A more suitable model for a Transition group is a network, which distributes information and power rather than concentrating it. [...]* One inspiring example of a healthy, large organisation is the Mondragon federation of cooperatives, based in the Basque region of Spain. (Scaling up 2014, emphasis added)

However, there are also some contrary thought processes and features running parallel to these. Firstly, there is a somewhat problematic argument of urgency preventing the adoption of more horizontal models: “we haven't got the time to spend all our efforts figuring out what [options beyond traditional hierarchical models] look like” and “regarding consensus, it's great if time isn't a really scarce resource”⁴⁴ (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 35). Similarly, the Transition Network as an organisation has “adopted a temporary hierarchical structure, with a parallel process to find a more suitable model that we'll adopt in time” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 35). Also the fact that the Transition Network presents a set criteria and process for groups that wish to become 'official' Transition initiatives (see Becoming official 2014) creates an image where the Network is essentially an authority that stands above the various initiatives around the world. Sections on their website and the Transition Companion (Hopkins 2011) also come across as highly authoritative, a prominent example being a principle titled “How we communicate” (2014). Although it contains useful information on being context sensitive when approaching people from different backgrounds, the very title itself seems to represent a form of 'us and them' thinking – an implication that either one must follow the advice or not call themselves a Transition initiative. It is likely that this is part of the efforts to control the overall image of the movement, but it seems nonetheless somewhat contradictory to many of the stated Transition principles.

44 In a similar vein: “Running through all of this decision-making and action-taking is the imperative of time. Climate Chaos isn't going to wait for us to get 100% consensus on every point, nor will fossil fuel depletion. Time may not be a challenge for your group. If it isn't, you're very fortunate. For the rest of us, we're encountering plenty of barriers to action outside of our groups. The last thing we need is to augment those barriers with our own personal psychological attachments to the dogma or paradigms of a certain way of working.” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 35.)

Overall, it seems reasonable to argue that the ambivalence towards questions of hierarchy is related to the tensions between practical considerations and (red-green) ideological tendencies, particularly the need to try and capture the interest and commitment of a highly diverse array of people. Brian Davey's (a participant at Transition Nottingham) passionate response to some of the criticisms relating to the Transition movement takes the issue of leadership and hierarchy from the ideological to the practical in a very telling way:

We are struggling already – the number of people with the organisational and social entrepreneurial skills to set things up is small. There are lots willing to follow but few willing, or able, to lead – or we have not yet found the way to encourage and help people learn to lead, to learn to organise and to become social/environmental entrepreneurs (not in the profit seeking sense). Probably, mainly, this is because most people are used to working in large organisations and they always assume that one has to start off too big and “build” things like architects and developers – assembling complex organisational structures – rather than develop through “planting things”, then tend them, letting them evolve and grow step by step. (It is also because people have this habit of assuming, if something needs doing, that they must “call on” politicians to do it [...].) (Quoted in Hopkins 2009.)

It is certainly understandable that the constraints of what 'ordinary' people, and even many activists, consider as normal and safe (i.e. hierarchical structures) cannot be completely abandoned or sidelined – nor am I trying to argue that they necessarily have to be – if the idea is to gain a broad support and activity base. Thus, rather than advocating a single organisational solution, the Transition Network encourages each initiative to find the model that best suits their locale and culture, some more rooted in alternative cultures than others. Although a network form as such is considered desirable, both within the Transition initiatives (with sub-groups that each have a representative in so called 'steering group') and the movements as a whole⁴⁵, what is presented as more crucial is that initiatives agree on a clear purpose, some clear rules (e.g. meeting guidelines, decision-making principles, communication principles, and so on), and methods of resolving disputes (see e.g. Coming together as groups 2014). Thus, the questions of hierarchy and democracy are left for each group to decide for themselves.

In terms of strategy, the image that emerges from the research material could be described as *the optimistic diplomacy of 'transitional' change*. Indeed, the strategy for gaining broader support and membership (as per Hopkins and the Transition Network) seems to be based on a form of positive diplomacy where one foot is always firmly in the present socio-cultural and economic structures and the other in alternative futures. Also, as the description of the usual processes involved in Transition activities reveals, change is sought slowly, from small projects gradually towards more

45 As stated in the Primer, the vision for the broader movement can be described as a “thriving cooperative network” (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 13).

significant behavioural and structural changes. It seems that a constant negotiation is taking place between the old and the new and it remains unclear whether the Transition initiatives are, in fact, transforming their communities or are the communities transforming the initiatives into more moderate forms (or whether the initiatives and the wider communities remain separated). This approach nonetheless represents a clear departure from more oppositional methods towards change.

4.3. In the end: “Resilience and localisation”

The solutions advocated by the movement, particularly as represented by the Transition network, are resilience and localisation. Resilience is understood as “the ability to respond and adapt to the unexpected” (Why 2014), or “the capacity of our businesses, communities and settlements to deal with shock” (Hopkins 2011, 78) which in practice is seen to mean things such as “stronger local economies, increased local democracy, strengthened local food culture and more local energy provision” (Hopkins 2008, Summing up Part 1: The oil age draws to a close). Resilience is also elaborated on in the following way:

Making a community more resilient, if viewed as the opportunity for an economic and social renaissance, for a new culture of enterprise and reskilling, should lead to a healthier and happier community while reducing its vulnerability to risk and uncertainty. In practice, a more adaptable community trains its young people in a wide range of skills, more decisions are taken at the local level, the community owns and manages more of its own assets and has access to some of the land adjoining it [...]. (Hopkins 2011, 45.)

More theoretically, Hopkins (e.g. 2008, The three ingredients of a resilient system) relies on studies of ecosystem resilience to describe the concept as having three core features: *diversity*, *modularity*, and *tightness of feedbacks*. The first is seen to refer, within the context of communities, to the diversity of elements (e.g. people, species, sources of food) that constitute a settlement, the diversity of connections between the elements, the diversity of functions and livelihoods within each settlement, the diversity of possible responses to changes in circumstances, the diversity in the use of land, and the diversity of connections to other settlements. Modularity, on the other hand, refers to the degree of self-organisation versus interdependence. A modular structure is viewed as one where “the parts of a system can more effectively organise in the event of shock” (ibid.). The globalised food industry that relies on transportation is used as an example of a non-modular system as the entire system becomes under challenge when one part – i.e. transportation – is threatened. Finally, tightness of feedbacks is refers to “how quickly and strongly the consequences of a change in one part of the system are felt and responded to in other parts” (ibid.). Centralised and globalised

systems are viewed as having weak feedback signals, meaning that the effects of our actions are spread far away and not necessarily detected in time. In contrast, localised systems are viewed as having tight feedbacks; revealing the consequences of actions very quickly (ibid.).

It is not surprising then that localisation is presented (on a more philosophical level) as “the concept that we re-prioritise the local and re-value the human being, and that the influence of huge centralised systems begins to decline” (Hopkins 2008, Evaluating possible ways forward). However, a more practically oriented characterisation is evident in *The Transition Companion*, where localisation is presented essentially as follows:

Increased meeting of local needs through local production [...] (especially for food, energy and construction). [...] A global network of communities localising their economies but sharing their experiences and advice. [...] The development, in parallel to existing businesses, of a more diverse, more robust local economy, promoting social enterprise and community ownership of key assets and businesses. [...] [A] wider diversity of skills [...]. Intensive [local] food production [...]. (Hopkins 2011, 48.)

The overall image that emerges is that on a practical level, resilience and localisation refer mostly to economic aspects, but a wider understanding also includes some key questions of socio-cultural and political nature. All of these will be examined in further details in the following three sections.

4.3.1. Economic shift towards localisation and the spread of cooperative forms of production

It is evident throughout the research material that economic aspects play a crucial, in many ways *the most* crucial, part of the process. This is supported by countless statements, such as the following:

[Transition] is not about the ‘greening’ of society – its gradually becoming more ‘environmentally friendly’ – it is about a shift in focus, enabling resilience at all levels and fast-tracking the creation of a more appropriate and, where possible, localised economy (Policies for Transition 2014).

Transition groups aim ultimately to catalyse the localisation of their local economy. They strive to move from running small community projects to thinking and acting much bigger. New skills and ways of thinking will lead Transition initiatives to become social enterprises, such as becoming developers, banks, energy companies and so on. (Hopkins 2011, 234; Ingredients 2014.)

This idea of the localised economy is embodied particularly in the REconomy project. At the heart of this project is the concept and practice of a Transition-oriented Enterprise (TE). This is defined as:

a financially viable trading entity [meaning that it at least meets costs, and means of exchange other than money may be used] that fulfils a real community need, delivers social benefits and has beneficial, or at least neutral, environmental impacts (What's a Transition-oriented enterprise? 2014).

Accordingly, a Transition-oriented Enterprise is portrayed as having five characteristics: resilience outcomes; appropriate resource use; appropriate localisation; more than profit; and being a part of the community. The first of these, *resilience outcome*, means that the enterprise is supposed to contribute to the local community's ability to respond and adapt to, for example, energy and resource shortages, impacts of climate change, and economic uncertainty (and does not cause harm elsewhere) and is also resilient in itself through financial sustainability and independence (as much as possible) from external funding. The second characteristic, *appropriate resource use*, refers to minimising the use of fossil fuels, respecting the limits of all natural resources, and “minimising and integrating waste streams” (ibid.). The third factor, *appropriate localisation*, means that the enterprise operates “at a scale appropriate to the environment, economy and business sector with regard to sourcing, distribution and interaction with the wider economy” (ibid.). The fourth characteristic, *more than profit*, refers to the goal of an enterprise which is “to provide affordable, sustainable products and services and decent livelihoods rather than to generate profits for others”. Finally, the fifth and last trait, *being a part of the community*, means that the enterprise works “towards building a common wealth, owned and controlled as much as is practical by their workers, customers, users, tenants and communities” with “structures or business models which are as open, autonomous, equitable, democratic, inclusive and accountable as possible” (ibid.).

The REconomy project report “The New Economy in 20 Enterprises” (2013) shows, as the title suggests, 20 case studies of enterprises that are presented as 1) being sustainable; 2) offering social benefits; 3) having shared ownership; and 4) providing essential goods and services for the local community (op. cit., 3). They are described as representing “a new kind of community-led, place-based economy” which is geared towards meeting basic needs, particularly in the areas of food, energy, transport, housing, health, finance, and waste (ibid.). However, a closer examination of these examples of the 'new economy' reveals some slightly contradictory aspects in light of the 'anti-growth' argument presented earlier. Firstly, there is a continued emphasis on the market in the way that 're-localisation' is presented as “the market opportunity” (op. cit., 7), thus implying a profit-oriented perspective. Secondly, many of the enterprises have paid (non-owner) employees and unpaid volunteers, and make surplus profits and interest payments to owners (who may or may not be workers). Of course, most of these also have democratic decision-making structures (even within hierarchical models), low rates of interest payments (if any), and a large part of the profits

are allocated to provide funds for community projects. As such, they do appear to represent a certain shift from excessive consumerism to meeting basic needs in more democratic, cooperative ways.

4.3.2. Socio-cultural shift towards intrinsic values

The socio-cultural part of the solution is evident, for example, in the way that 'Transition' is portrayed as “a cultural shift”, “an inner process”, and “storyteller” (Hopkins 2011, 72–76). The required cultural change is not presented as the need to adopt a completely new set of values, but as the need to shift the emphasis from 'extrinsic' values – those relating to the perceptions of others, such as status, wealth, power and so on – towards more 'intrinsic' values already within all of us – such as those related to a sense of community, family, nature, and self-development (Hopkins 2011, 74–75). This is also a core part of the overall 'inner process' towards “the qualities that this transition calls forth – a move from materialism to values such as community, care, love and creativity; from arrogance and inequality to compassion” (Creating a space for inner Transition 2014). The concept of 'inner Transition' is based on the idea that “we shape our physical world in response to what we value and believe, and our values and beliefs are in turn shaped by the world around us” and therefore “Transition cannot be just about material change, such as putting up solar panels and planting trees” (Hopkins 2011, 73). What the processes of inner Transition are presented as drawing inspiration from are three areas of thought: psychology and ecopsychology (e.g. the view that our relationship to the Earth is significantly affects our psychology); Eastern traditions' insights on the transformation of consciousness; and Earth-centred wisdom on living sustainably, mainly from various indigenous peoples around the world (Creating a space for inner Transition 2014). Therefore, it seems reasonable to argue that the ideological and discursive aspects of change have a key role to play as a socio-cultural solutions advocated by the movement.

4.3.3. Political shift: Reconciling community empowerment and state action

As suggested by Quilley (2011, 10), “Transition is a movement of liberal, highly educated cosmopolitans with left-liberal political inclinations and a strong attachment to the institutions of liberal-social democracies”. This certainly resonates with the research material which, granted, only provides the view from the top of the movement, not its variety. Nonetheless, the view that emerges is one where there are parallel processes of community empowerment and a continuing belief that

states will eventually 'do the right thing'. This dual aspect is present in much of the research material, but it is particularly pronounced in a recent blog post by Hopkins:

How would it be if we, as an international movement, ran an international campaign in the run up to COP21 [21st Conference of the Parties on Climate Change 2015] which, rather than the kind of "you should be doing this" type campaign that never seems to get anywhere, was instead a "look what we're already doing" campaign. [...] In doing so we perhaps do what has never been possible in previous negotiations like COP, we take the fear out of the necessary changes, we show that *we* aren't waiting for their permission, and that communities are thriving, rediscovering each other again, creating new economies and feeling inspired and driven in a way they never have before. (Hopkins blog entry 02.04.2014.)

Indeed, when it comes to the relationship to states and governments, there is a clear contradiction between the idea of moving away from centralised systems and simultaneously and persistently legitimising their existence in the sphere of institutional politics. However, this is perhaps the area where the research material falls short; for example the four case studies conducted by Felicetti (2014) demonstrated that

the overwhelming majority of Transition participants I interviewed were highly critical of politics. Comments ranged from politics being 'detached from the people' to 'a business committee'. Moreover, although observation suggests that some local leaders may closely abide to a non-adversarial attitude and be willing to engage with institutions, the bulk of ordinary participants may struggle to welcome this development. [...] The existence of a non-adversarial ideology in a movement does not guarantee that participants will leave behind their (more or less adversarial) views. (Felicetti 2014, 12.)

Nonetheless, the solution advocated from the top seems to be one where the power of communities to take part in the construction of their futures is reconciled with the power of centralised political systems, however complex that relationship proves to be.

5. OBJECTIVIST EXPLANATION: THE TRANSITION MOVEMENT AND THE POLITICS OF RESISTANCE

This chapter reconstructs and re-examines the empirical analysis established in chapter four through the critical-theoretical 'objectivist' explanation, focusing on the conceptual vocabulary of the politics of resistance. It aims to answer the questions of how is the Transition movement a form of politics of resistance and how can this case study help to advance IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance. The first part discusses the why, meaning the targets of change and resistance contained in the Transition narrative; the second part the how, meaning the key methods of resistance; and the third part the overall image of resistance that emerges from the

whole. Discussion will then proceed to the more immediate insights and implications, namely the contradictory and complex nature of the movement's politics of resistance. Finally, consideration will be given to the theoretical implications and the contributions of the analysis to IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance.

5.1. The 'why': Globalisation, capitalism, scientific rationality and the values of modern masculinity

After the empirical analysis, it is now useful to return to the theoretical and conceptual frameworks introduced in chapter two. First and foremost, it is clear that the solution of localisation is directly related to the processes of globalisation. More specifically, it is related to economic, neoliberal globalisation both in terms of globalised production and distribution systems and in terms of the power of large corporations. The concerns relating to the globalised production and distribution system seem to be primarily of environmental, social, and economic nature. As indicated, long supply chains are seen as placing high strains on the environment, particularly in the form carbon emissions; they are also seen as having weak feedback mechanisms that make it easier to ignore ecological destruction and global inequalities in a great variety of issues; and the centralised and globalised forms of production (referring here to the way that, say, many food, manufacturing, and clothing industries are concentrated in particular areas of the world) are seen to jeopardise livelihoods and the ability to withstand sudden changes in communities around the world. Similarly, the power of large corporations is seen as draining local economies and livelihoods as well as creating mono-cultures (both in terms of culture and in terms of production) that are particularly detrimental to local 'resilience', understood as the ability to respond and adapt to changes. The role of peak oil arguments is to 'force' the practical view that globalised forms of production and distribution cannot continue without becoming increasingly unaffordable to the majority of the human population.

However, there is a certain lack of attention given to the role of global and national politics – a matter which separates the Transition movement from other movements that are explicitly against the neoliberal form of globalisation. As characterised by Gills (2000a, 4), neoliberal economic globalisation does not refer only to globalised production and distribution or the power of capital, but also to the political exclusion of dissident social forces, the key role of market ideology in state policies and state forms, and the power of transnationalised institutions which facilitate global

capital accumulation. It is likely that this avoidance of 'politics' relates to the need to remain positive and constructive; to engage with the mainstream rather than stay confined to those from existing activist and counter-culture backgrounds; and to continue 'operating under the radar' and thus avoid powerful enemies. However, although this rationale is understandable, it is nonetheless problematic. Some of the key grievances of past movements, including the undemocratic nature of transnational institutions, the lack of accountability of transnational corporations, the relationship between corporate money and electoral politics, and the role of neoliberal ideology in (particularly Western) state policies, are arguably directly related to the continuation of growth-oriented economic globalisation. Avoiding these aspects and believing that governments will one day be convinced by the example set by the Transition movement and radically alter their policies, seem to be founded on a highly limited understanding of the interrelatedness of our dominant political and economic systems. On the other hand, resisting globalisation by building small-scale alternatives and experimenting with forms of community empowerment may yet prove more fruitful in transforming the mindsets of ordinary people than the politics of public protest.

Beyond these questions of globalisation, some key aspects of capitalism, scientific rationality and modern masculine values also play a crucial role in the Transition form of politics of resistance. Indeed, if capitalism is to be understood in Paterson's terms as relating to the growth-imperative, commodification, profit maximation, and inequalities, Transition certainly represents some anti-capitalist tendencies. As demonstrated, there is an explicit opposition to the key role of economic growth in the political economy today even though there may be a lack of understanding of what this entails. For example, the continued acceptance of the legitimate role of interest payments represents a growth-based logic which seems to go unrecognised. Also, even though the Transition ideology seems to resist the logic of commodification (the emphasis being in democratic and cooperative forms of business and exchange models), in practice it also has no qualms about the continuance of, for example, wage-labour. Similarly, although profit maximation is considered as undesirable, there is still an acceptance of the logic that investments are made using capital and these are used to generate (if possible) surplus profit. Granted, the fact that most of this surplus profit is then redirected to socially beneficial projects is a step into a different direction. The final aspect of inequality is also resisted through the promotion of democratic cooperatives and continued references to global inequalities and the issues of local 'social justice' and 'equity'. However, in practice the Transition 'new economy' has very few methods of economic redistribution beyond the social investments made with profits. Thus, the end result is a mixture of the old and the new, containing both affirmations of and challenges to the logic of capitalism.

Similarly, the relationship to scientific and technocratic rationality is multifaceted and complex. On one hand, the view of human-nature duality, the basis of the anthropocentric and scientific worldview, is clearly resisted. Similarly, technocratic rationality is resisted in the way that control of local lands and livelihoods are seen as belonging in the hands of those who depend on them, the local communities. However, the language of the movement simultaneously emphasises scientific rationality by trying to appeal to people through highly scientific figures and information. Similarly, the question of *political* control seems to be left in the hands of technocratic structures. There are references to increased local democracy, but these are not elaborated on. Thus, again, there are diverse elements involved, a negotiation between traditional and alternative forms.

Finally, the values of modern masculinity – individualism, instrumental rationality, and domination – are also a key aspect that seems to be continually resisted *and* negotiated in the Transition approach. Firstly, there is a pronounced tendency to promote a transition from individualistic to more collectivist values and worldviews, represented for example by the focus on communities rather than individuals, intrinsic rather than extrinsic values, and an Earth-centred rather than anthropocentric worldview. Indeed, there is very little mention of people as individuals, the point of identification and subjectivity is clearly in *communities*. Also ownership – of businesses, land, and so on – is also presented as belonging to the collective rather than individuals, thus clearly challenging some of the (masculine) values of modern societies. Similarly, the emphasis on hand-based skills, more 'feminine' forms of work (e.g. farming, health care, and so on), and taking care of the community through socially beneficial projects challenge the logics of individualism and instrumental rationality. However, although the promotion of network-like, democratic forms of organisation – both internally and in businesses and the wider community – contest the logic of domination and hierarchy, there are also contradictory elements that support these. Nonetheless, this is also a question that is highly complex; even if official hierarchies do not exist, unofficial hierarchies may (and usually do) form which are much harder, if not impossible, to subject to democratic control (see e.g. Juris 2008, 18). Thus, in some cases, instituting transferable, democratically controlled official hierarchies may be a way to contain more durable forms of domination.

What this discussion on the question of 'why' demonstrates is that the Transition movement both confirms and challenges various conceptions of the subject matter. Within the realm of 'why', it is notable how the narrative embodies a highly specific, yet multifaceted portrayal of the terrain of

resistance. It confirms the neo-Marxist and neo-Gramscian understanding that the politics of resistance is often motivated by the crises related to a globalising capitalist system (see e.g. Cox 1999; Morton 2002; Rupert 2003; Gill 2008), but it does not appear to share their explicitly class-based ontology. Furthermore, rather than focusing on various transnational political and economic elites as the targets of resistance, the movement considers ordinary people as the key agents and targets of change. In this view, it is the *social relations* between people that constitute a structure, such as the capitalist system, and therefore a slow transformation of those relations constitute a slow transformation of the system itself. It is also notable that the multiple causes of resistance, which relate to fundamental philosophical questions relating to Western modernity (such as human-nature duality, individualism, and instrumental rationalism), cannot be reduced to globalisation or capitalism, even though they are arguably interrelated in many ways (see Paterson 2001, 40–52).

5.2. The 'how': Transforming popular common sense through principled pragmatism and positive direct action

As already implied, a core method in the Transition movement's politics of resistance is challenging aspects of 'popular common sense', the “amalgam of historically effective ideologies, scientific doctrines and social mythologies” (Rupert 2003, 185). The suggested creation of new stories and myths – e.g. the 'genius of communities' rather than technology or global politics – is one aspect of challenging and transforming the common sense of many places. Another interrelated aspect is the ways in which the movement ideology challenges some of the core values of modern masculinity discussed in the previous section. Of course none of this is a matter of totality; some aspects are challenged while others are confirmed and legitimised. The relationship to global and national politics is particularly ambiguous; on one hand, the notion that power and subjectivity reside in the local and everyday challenges popular common sense of who is able to bring about meaningful change, but on the other hand, the institutions of liberal democracies are mostly left unchallenged. This clearly implies a lack of understanding by Hopkins and the Transition Network of the key role that states themselves play, not only in issues of globalisation, but also in the continuation of competitive, anthropocentric values and worldviews (see e.g. Paterson 2001, 42–45; Eriksson & Andersson 2010, 125). However, trying to appeal to people from all walks of life while simultaneously pursuing fairly radical objectives (e.g. localised, cooperatively organised economies) inevitably requires confirming some aspects of popular common sense while trying to transform others. This view is also confirmed by Benford and Snow (e.g. 2000, 618–619) who

argue that successful collective action frames, or movement narratives, must somehow appeal to values and beliefs that resonate with the wider socio-cultural setting in which they are invoked. Of course, utilising the same core narrative in a variety of socio-cultural settings may be problematic and ineffective in drawing support.

Secondly, the Transition form of resistance also has clear points of resemblance with feminist activism identified by Eschle and Maiguashca (2007). Similar to the feminist 'anti-globalisation' activists, the practices and goals included in the Transition model vary from the material and instrumental (e.g. economic gains through new livelihoods) to the self-developmental and ideational (e.g. so called 'inner Transition' and wider cultural change); they aim to appeal to a wide variety of audiences (e.g. authorities, businesses, other activists, ordinary people); and they use a variety of methods (e.g. discursive, behavioural, psychological). Similarly, there is some recognition of potential power hierarchies within the initiatives and suggestions for ways in which to try and overcome or ameliorate these. In a word, they reflect Eschle and Maiguashca's concept of *principled pragmatism* (2007, 294–297) in the way that they rely on certain core principles (epitomised by their grand narrative and the principles of action) and the experience base of pioneering initiatives, but simultaneously encourage experimentation and a diversity of practices.

Finally, the prefigurative element provides a third angle on the key methods contained in the Transition form of politics of resistance. Although the Transition model does not quite live up to the normative understanding of prefigurative politics as forms of activism that are based on horizontal and decentralised organisational structures,⁴⁶ It does, however, represent the prefigurative idea of an 'ethically consistent relationship between means and ends (the end referring here to matters such as the respect for diversity, rather than the end of hierarchy per se). Similarly, it also represents the views of prefigurative movements as those that follow the Gandhian notion to 'be the change you wish to see in the world', meaning that they seek to realize in the here and now the transformations envisioned for the future (see Brissette 2013, 223). This is also reflected in the concept of *positive direct action* which is focused on doing and creating in the present the desired structures and processes of the future (Milstein 2010, 70). The Transition form of prefigurative politics – one that does not automatically refer to the removal of official hierarchies, but is based on constructive direct action – could perhaps be more appropriately termed as 'pragmatic prefigurativism'. It is positive direct action that is practical and experimental, based on activities and principles that are

⁴⁶ As discussed, the Transition model does not foreclose the use of hierarchical models and even the Transition Network has a hierarchical structure.

considered as long-term (rather than temporary or instrumental), but they do not necessarily reflect a form of 'power-free social engagement' (Howard & Pratt-Boyden 2013, 233). Indeed, here-in lies the problem with prefigurative politics whose content is *predetermined* in this form; the quest for power-free social engagement may, as discussed earlier, give rise to *unofficial* hierarchies that are much harder to control than democratic, temporary forms of official hierarchies⁴⁷.

All of these aspects constitute a very different portrayal of resistance compared to more widespread understandings of the topic as loud declarations of discontent by representatives of global civil society (see e.g. Colás 2002). Although feminists, such as Eschle and Maiguashca (2007; 2005b) have already drawn attention to the multiple methods and locations of resistance, the constructive, positive side of resistance seems to have been mostly overlooked within critical IR theorists. Indeed, this is the key contribution of 'pragmatic prefigurativism'; the recognition that positive forms of direct action can also be a method of resistance.

5.3. The 'what': Covert, everyday resistance and place-based globalism

Returning to Hollander and Einwohner's typology of resistance, it seems reasonable to argue that the Transition approach represents a form of *covert resistance*, or 'oppositional activity' that is not necessarily recognised as resistance by its so called targets (Hollander & Einwohner 2004, 545–546). To clarify, 'oppositional' was described as having a variety of meanings, such as contradicting, challenging, aiming to change, rejecting, and damaging or disrupting (op. cit., 538). The covert nature of resistance is manifested most of all in the non-confrontational, everyday or 'low-profile' resistance (op. cit., 539) portrayed in the movement narrative. This is evident particularly in the explicit recommendation to 'operate under the radar' to avoid both victims and enemies (Brangwyn & Hopkins 2008, 22). Furthermore, although the emphasis is in positive solutions and the avoidance of explicit opposition, the solutions themselves clearly challenge particular socio-cultural and economic structures. Trying to change them is inherently a key aspect in the Transition form of politics of resistance. However, it is also notable that the difference between resistance and complicity is difficult to determine or maintain. For example, protests that aim to change a government policy (e.g. on same sex marriages, or carbon emissions) are immediately identified as

⁴⁷ For example, the research by Milkman, Luce and Lewis (2013) demonstrated that the overarching principle of horizontalism that was meant to disrupt hierarchies and existing social categories in many ways enabled the marginalization of various categories of people, such as women, sexual minorities, and people of colour, while the participation of the educated, white males would (yet again) gain a more visible and pronounced position (op. cit., 31–32).

resistance, or oppositional activity, but they also simultaneously support and affirm governments as legitimate decision-makers in such matters (see e.g. Day 2004). The resistance of one thing (e.g. policy) actually becomes complicity in another (e.g. the political system). Similarly, the Transition narrative represents a resistance to particular aspects of dominant socio-cultural and economic structures in most of the OECD world, as well as to the lack of sufficient action demonstrated by its political elites, but it also simultaneously affirms other related aspects. What this demonstrates, more than anything, is that it is highly important to not only focus on the explicit (i.e. public protest), but also consider the wider circumstances and impact of 'resistance'.

Moving on to the aspect that perhaps most of all embodies the movement's clear relevance to IR; that of *place-based globalism* (as utilised by Gibson-Graham 2008). This concept draws attention to the artificial and unsustainable separation between local and global, national and international, inside and outside (Walker 1993). It emphasises local action as the site of "a global politics of local transformations" and highlights the transformative potential of place-based politics replicated across the globe (Gibson-Graham 2008, 660, 662). The Transition narrative clearly mirrors this idea. It is a form of economic and social transformation that is place-based yet global (both in ideology and, through its network form, in practice). Furthermore, it confirms "the centrality of subjects and ethical practices of self-cultivation" (ibid.) through the efforts to shift identifications, subjectivities, values and worldviews towards more collectivist, communal, intrinsic and 'Earth-centred' forms. It also embodies the "everyday temporality of change and the vision of transformation as a continual struggle to change subjects and places and conditions of life under inherited circumstances of difficulty and uncertainty" (ibid.). This is reflected particularly in the combination of material and ideational change of everyday life and the constant negotiation between the old and the new, the historical conditions (again both material and ideational) and the diverse visions of transformation. The key is in transforming local economies and minds in the now and in the everyday, towards a range of 'postcapitalist' practices, in the face of globalisation (see op. cit., 662).

Change in this imaginary – and indeed in the Transition model – is based on the power of small-scale, local action that focuses on the possibilities of the present. These are 'places' whose attempts at change and resistance are rooted in transcending many familiar structures and narratives; a politics of re-articulation, subjectivation and becoming. Of course there are also contradictory elements, as discussed in previous sections, but these do not make the efforts any less meaningful. The key is not a totalitarian stance where every action has to represent a postcapitalist logic; it is rather the imperfect struggle to change the normal and the mundane under circumstances of

difficulty and uncertainty. This is certainly a view that differs very significantly from the image of politics of resistance contained in the idea of 'global civil society' as a massive, globally organised counter-hegemonic force or a "postmodern transnational political party" (Gill 2000, 138).

5.4. The contradictory and complex nature of the politics of resistance

One of the key lessons that can be drawn from examining the Transition narrative is that 'resistance' is a highly contradictory phenomenon – a view that poststructuralists such as Amoore (2006) are acutely aware of. As already revealed, a core criticism contained in the narrative concerns economic growth and economic globalisation, but the Transition model nonetheless reveals an acceptance of some explicitly growth-based practices (e.g. interest rates). It also claims to focus on intrinsic values, but simultaneously practices instrumental, 'extrinsic' rhetoric (e.g. localisation as the market opportunity). The insistence on being non-confrontational and non-political also seems to be in contradiction with the explicit criticisms of state inaction; the highly political subject matters and behaviours; and the central role of direct action. The mere existence of the Transition movement, its core rationale for action (e.g. 'if we wait for governments, it'll be too little, too late'), is a criticism of state inaction, thus making it a form of confrontation and challenge. Of course, this is also complemented by the reformist view that the Transition movement is paving way to *eventual* government action.

Nevertheless, what this case confirms is that dichotomies, such as power / resistance, or refusal / complicity, can be highly misleading. Indeed, the Transition movement itself embodies all of these aspects in one way or another. It challenges and resists the perceived inaction of official politics, but simultaneously embraces the continuation of state power alongside its efforts towards community empowerment. The movement itself also represents a form of power, tries to empower, and contains different power relations within – all of which are highly political aspects, yet mostly unacknowledged as such in any explicit manner by the Transition Network. However, rather than making the movement non-political, it only highlights the limited, although widespread, understanding of politics and the political as the realm of political parties and states. Overall, the politics of resistance contained in the Transition movements is thus one of ambiguities and revelations – understanding these will benefit not only the movement members themselves, but also any IR scholar willing to see beyond state-centric conceptions of politics, resistance, and power.

5.5. Expanding IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance

As stated in the introduction, a core argument and finding of this thesis is that the Transition movement represents a different kind of 'transnational social movement' and a different kind of politics of resistance compared to the more explicitly political forms engaging in public protest demonstrations. Common understandings of transnational social movements emphasise characteristics, such as membership in multiple nations, their confrontational methods, and their international, clearly defined targets (see Tarrow 2001, 11; Khagram et al. 2002, 8). The locally based Transition movements (Transition initiatives), with their diverse, non-confrontational methods, and ordinary people's everyday practices and mindsets as the primary targets of change, do not easily fit this image. Does that mean that they cannot be considered as 'transnational' or relevant to IR? On the contrary, there are multiple aspects that make the movement transnational: physically through the *transnational network* of Transition movements; discursively through the globally framed justifications and criticisms; and ideologically through the aspirations for transnational, potentially global changes. There are also multiple aspects that make the movement political and relevant to IR without the need for 'contentious interactions with powerholders' (e.g. Tarrow 2001, 11). The most important of these concerns the deep interconnections between the social, economic, and political; trying to reconfigure social and economic relations is a highly political act that also directly impacts the workings of official politics. As already argued, "it is contestations at the micro-level, over the intricacies of everyday life, that provide the raw material for global domination, and the key to disrupting global strategies of domination (Kulynych 1997, 337, referencing Foucault 1980). The same thought echoes in the concept of place-based globalism and its idea of a global politics of local transformations. Therefore, it is extremely important that we expand our practical and theoretical horizons to also realise the world political importance of social movements in their multiple forms, methods, targets, and locations. Only then can we understand their potential for more radical transformations.

When it comes to the politics of resistance, it is similarly clear that focusing on the workings of transnational public protest demonstrations only captures certain aspects of the topic. Resistance, understood most of all as striving to change or prevent something, is a multifaceted phenomenon that extends beyond the explicit. Similarly, politics and the political does not necessarily require a

focus on political and economic elite; engaging in questions of power (whether material, discursive, or ideological in its orientation), or the "struggle over the resources and arrangements that set the basic terms of our practical and passionate relations" (Unger 1987, 145–146), represent an ultimate form of politics. Thus, opening one's eyes to the radical and political potential of *seemingly* non-political movements is an avenue of research that critical IR scholars would do well to explore.

6. PERSONAL EXPLORATION AND CONSTRUCTIVIST EXPLANATION: THOUGHTS ON POSITIONALITY AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Reflecting back on the research process and the identity and impact of the researcher is a key aspect of critical theories (especially those of feminist orientation). This short chapter carries out such reflection in the context of a narrative, hermeneutic 'exploration' of personal experience and identity within this research. Towards the end, the narrative engages in a more explicit, constructivist explanation of the research process. The function of the personal narrative, as already indicated, is multiple: it disrupts assumptions of the researcher as a distanced spectators; it represents an attempt at self-liberation from the masculine, logico-scientific ideals of 'scientific' analysis; and it lays bare my own role and position in this thesis.

To begin with, it has no doubt become clear that the topic of this thesis is highly personal. Somewhat surprisingly however, it feels as if though different elements of the thesis directly reflect different aspects of my personality and identity. For one, the multitude of theories and analytical methods employed is a direct reflection of my personality; the difficulty of making decisions and, more importantly, the tendency to focus on the larger picture, the way different aspects interact and intertwine, rather than some specific detail of any given topic (in other words, a tendency towards holistic rather than atomistic viewpoints). When my research plan was reviewed by my peers, suggestions were made to take a more narrow focus or choose a specific aspect of a given theory, but such a narrow approach seemed impossible. My perception was that it could not do justice to either the empirical 'object' (seeing myself as a 'critical friend' who had a duty not to undermine or over-idealise their efforts) or the theoretical richness involved in it. It may be that the theoretical multiplicity and complexity has made this a challenging piece to take in, but I would make many of

the same choices had I the chance to restart this thesis from the beginning (although I might be tempted to include a great many *more* insights from sociological and political science research).

Secondly, it seems that the interest in a great variety of critical theories and theory development is a natural inclination of the student in me. It is the student who finds motivation and inspiration in the abstract, the theoretical, the intellectually challenging. This is the logical, rational side in me that strives to be reasonable and independent. This is also, in essence, the one that has been in a fairly dominant position in the text so far, adhering to the norms of the dominant logico-scientific form of writing. However, identities naturally overlap and intertwine. It is the activist that is deeply rooted in real-life experiences and problems and brings in the normative, emancipatory aspect. It is from this experience and identity base that the contradictions of resistance and the multiple understandings and points of power, resistance and politics seem particularly reflective of a complex 'reality'. It is also from this point of view that the Transition model seems to reflect a reasonable, although invariably incomplete, response to the crises of our times; it is practical in terms of its modes of activity and practical in terms of recognising that governments are also needed to prevent a number of apocalyptic futures.

However, some of this also sits uneasily with the formative anarchist and feminist in me. To be clear, I am not referring to the anarchism of chaos and violence, but to one of non-violence, mutual aid and constructive direct action. And it is a feminism of holding all beings as equal and thus being attentive to naturalised forms of domination and hierarchy. This is the side in me that does not agree with Hobbesian or Lockean understandings of human nature as *inherently* competitive or rational, but rather more those of Rousseau. And therefore the state and the interrelated competitiveness and nationalism of 'imagined communities' sits uneasily with my normative understandings of the world. It is from this identity and experience base that critical theories strike so important and the *trust* in governments that shines through from the various materials written by Hopkins strike as rather deluded. History certainly gives little indication that the key criticisms of the movement (e.g. growth-oriented political economies) will be addressed in any meaningful way in the context of institutional politics. Not unless they no longer have any other choice (which will be never).

And this brings us to the realm of emotions. There is considerable anger in me about the state of the world (or my perception of it). The little Finn that was raised to believe in benevolent governments and social democratic values – but globally, unlike my more nationally orientated parents – has been sorely disappointed. Thus, there is a profound anger that often rears its head – an anger about

the blatant destruction of the Earth and the immense and incomprehensible inequalities within it. Things are not helped by statistics that tell me that 85 of the richest people have as much wealth as half of the entire human population (see e.g. Wearden 2014). The ensuing conviction that governments are not the key to any fundamental changes towards greater human and planetary wellbeing is the key reason for wanting to explore the Transition movement – people who seemed to be *building* changes (however small they may be) rather than *waiting* for them. However, there was also a deep and irrational sense of disappointment when the research material revealed the movement's (well, Hopkins') continuing reliance on governments. What kind of strange mixture of liberalism, anarchism, and collectivism?! It would take a lifetime of ethnographic research to work out the real diversity of views, a time that I do not have.

In this constellation of feelings and reactions, another emotion has also manifested itself; that of guilt. It is related to the Eurocentric, middle class aspect of this thesis – namely the choice to examine the Transition movement rather than some other, non-Western example of movements that represent a fairly holistic criticism of and long-term solutions to the crises of our times.⁴⁸ I have particularly begun to associate the white, happy face of Rob Hopkins with Eurocentric, middle class, environmental activism that, honestly speaking, often strikes as highly annoying. This may not be a fair assessment, and I am similarly implicated in these very same characteristics (even though I do not identify myself as middle class or specifically as an environmental activist, I am certain that some others might), but they nonetheless cause me considerable uneasiness. The same goes for the sheer amount of optimism embodied in the works of Hopkins. Yes, optimism is no doubt a powerful tool in motivating people and perhaps one of the greatest lesson contained in the Transition model, but it is so very hard to be optimistic without being blissfully ignorant (which I do not think Hopkins is). There are so many obstacles in our way. Beyond the prevalence of self-centred and self-entitled attitudes, it is even difficult to try and live ecologically in your personal life, because all basic everyday necessities that are organic, local, biodegradable and so on are usually ridiculously expensive unless you actually grow everything yourself. It is enough to make you want to scream. And sometimes I do. But I also try to rise above it and look at the negatives *and* the positives. This is a crucial ability for staying sane and it is this the very same ability that is reflected in the critical-hermeneutic approach chosen for this thesis. Balancing empathy and critique is the key to avoiding both overt idealism and overt pessimism.

48 One potential would have been to examine the philosophy of Buen Vivir (the good life), prevalent in among many social movements in Latin America (see e.g. Gudynas 2011).

Overall, it is clear that although I did not begin this thesis with the intent of making it some kind of identity project, it has invariably become one. On the other hand, this is hardly a surprise; this exploration has certainly demonstrated the embeddedness of one's values and worldviews in most of our choices, including those related to research components. Another question altogether concerns the role that these deeply personal aspects play in the interpretation itself. Where is the line between the researcher and the 'object' of research? For example, did I make the Transition movement into something that I wanted it to be? Did I find the movement as promoting collectivism because of my own egalitarian and collectivist inclinations? Certainly someone else could have ignored some of the issues that I raised. Similarly, I did not address a lot of the issues and theoretical perspectives that other researchers have focused on. I have had the power to include or exclude. But surely this is matter of the overall research framework – the particular questions, theories, methods, and research materials – which are different for each researcher. Furthermore, although my interpretations are inevitably informed by my own understandings and experience base⁴⁹, they are by no means arbitrary. Again the critical-hermeneutic approach and the variety of perspectives employed enabled me to ask questions rather than try and fit the movement into a single viewpoint or argument (of course, treating the movement as an instance of the politics of resistance was a particular viewpoint and argument in itself). These also allowed for the messy and incomplete character of the movement and of resistance overall to come to light, rather than constructing overly romantic ideas of either. It is actually notable that such romanticism was perhaps present in my original research plan, but it has more or less evaporated in the course of this thesis. Some of the striking differences between the early hypothesis presented in the research plan and the actual analysis are in themselves a clear indication of the 'integrity' of this thesis. Indeed, although many of my choices clearly reflect the green Marxist / anarchist / feminist within (Marxist inclinations being manifested in the view that economic relations play a key role in almost all aspects of life), I did not find or present the movement narrative as the perfect counterpart.

Overall, it is notable that I have tried to do justice to what Ackerley and True (2008) consider as 'the feminist research ethic'. This has involved being attentive to the power of epistemology, to

49 For example, my interpretation of the difficulties in appealing to 'normal' people through references to politics is highly informed by personal experience rather than academic knowledge. A very close example is my (Australian) husband; he votes (as most Australians do) and has a certain acceptance of the way that national and international politics operate, but he finds 'politics' to be essentially an uninviting realm of party politics and bureaucracies, separate from his own life. Similarly, often when meeting someone for the first time and telling them that I am studying international politics, their reaction is less than flattering. More often than not, they seem either overwhelmed or uninterested as if to say (in either case) "oh my god, how do you have the energy?". Thus, these people clearly associate politics and political with the bureaucracies of states and parties and, for the most part, consider them external to their everyday lives. Trying to appeal such people to action thus requires a different approach, a different vocabulary altogether.

boundaries and marginalisations, to relationship of power, and my own situatedness as a researcher in all of these. In the last instance it is the reader who interprets my work anew and determines whether s/he has been persuaded by the arguments presented.

7. CONCLUSIONS

In light of the multiple, interrelated and in many ways global ecological, economic, social and political crises, there is clearly a need for a fundamental rethink of the way that we think, behave, organise ourselves on this planet. It was the purpose of this thesis to examine one existing alternative of how we could organise ourselves and our economies in potentially 'postcapitalist' ways (a practical point) and to use this qualitative case study as a way to broaden IR's understanding of social movements and critical theory conceptualisations of the politics of resistance (a theoretical point). Furthermore, a third aspect has also played a key role in this thesis, that of methodology and the boundaries of IR. In terms of research questions, these interrelated concerns were translated into the following questions: 1) *What are the core criticisms, strategies and solutions embodied in the Transition narrative*; 2) *How is the Transition movement a form of politics of resistance and how can this case study help to advance IR's understanding of social movements and the politics of resistance*; and 3) *How does my own identity and positionality interact with the research*?

The key findings of the empirical analysis (chapter four) were that the movement narrative embodies deep criticisms of particular socio-cultural and (socio-)economic structures related to Western modernity (i.e. individualistic, materialistic, and anthropocentric values, and the globalised, energy-intensive, and growth-based economic system), and the inaction of political elites. As a response, it pursues what can be fittingly termed as the optimistic diplomacy of transitional change towards economic localisation and the spread of cooperative forms of production; intrinsic and Earth-centred (biocentric) values and worldviews; and the reconciliation of community empowerment and state action. More theoretically (chapter five), the movement represents 'covert', everyday resistance to some core aspects of globalisation, capitalism, scientific rationality, and modern masculinity. A key method of resistance is transforming aspects of popular common sense through principled pragmatism and positive direct action (termed as 'pragmatic prefigurativism'). The imaginary that emerges is one of place-based globalism, described most tellingly as 'a global

politics of local transformations'. However, rather than being the perfect counterpart of each of these perspectives and concepts, a key insight of the analysis concerned the multifaceted and often contradictory nature of resistance. This complexity and variety (including the local yet transnational character, the diverse, non-confrontational methods, and the emphasis on the slow transformation of everyday economic and social practices and mindsets) also contained the key to broadening common understandings of social movements and the politics of resistance within the discipline of International Relations. Accepting such a movement as a natural part of IR research requires embracing broader understandings of politics, resistance, and power, but surely this is to be welcomed. It is exclusion rather than inclusion that should raise cause for concern over the purposes and boundaries of IR. Turning a blind eye to the world political importance of social movements in their *multiple* forms, methods, targets, and locations would only serve to prolong our lack of regard for and understanding of potential sources of radical change.

Finally, the personal narrative in chapter six revealed a deep connection between some key aspects of the research and my own identity and positionality, thus demonstrating the embeddedness of values and worldviews in most of our research choices. It also highlighted the benefits of using theoretically holistic and methodologically critical-reflective tools, which allowed to draw strength from particular aspects of identity and personality. The narrative also brought to attention some potentially unresolved feelings (e.g. anger, disappointment, guilt) relating to the research, issues which were not explicit in the analyses in chapters four and five. Although reflected throughout the research, this part was a more pronounced move "away from assuming the stance of disinterested spectator and toward assuming the posture of feeling, embodied and vulnerable observer" (Bochner 2001, 135). A key purpose of this chapter was to disrupt more clearly the assumption of a distanced spectator and thereby question the necessity of holding such an ideal at all. Indeed, although the three different analyses focused on three different aspects of the research, my own subjectivity, personality, identity, and experience and knowledge base, were embodied in all of them. The position as an 'embodied observer' did not therefore prevent me from producing valid knowledge of the topic in question.

Overall, the broader implications underlying this thesis concern the purposes and boundaries of International Relations as a discipline. To be clear, I have not tried to argue for the exclusion of mainstream perspectives, whether related to our topics of study (ontology), our conceptions of what constitutes knowledge (epistemology), or our understanding of the contours of 'scientific' research (methodology). I have rather wanted to raise questions and to draw attention to the legitimacy of a

variety of multidisciplinary topics, viewpoints and methods within IR. This is a politics of prefigurative resistance that strives for a less hierarchical and more inclusive IR. Many people might argue that IR is already inclusive and multidisciplinary, but this certainly does not reflect my personal experiences at Tampere University. Indeed, my time at university has often been characterised by the continuous construction of disciplinary dichotomies, boundaries, and exclusions which have played a crucial role in the contours of this thesis.

Therefore, in terms of the research topic (which many have interrogated as not entirely suitable for IR research), I have wanted to raise questions about the purpose of IR, because it is our purposes, more than anything, that should draw the limits of our subject matter. It is clear that the purpose driving this research is critical, yet emancipatory; it concerns finding and interrogating ways to improve global wellbeing (without arguing for universal solutions). In this view, 'international' is interchangeable with 'global' or 'transnational' while 'politics' and 'relations' contain multiple meanings. This is not about the exclusion of states or state-centric IR, but the broadening of our horizons also *beyond* states and state-centric research. Through my theoretical choices, I have also wanted to draw attention to the partial and located nature of all knowledge claims and the benefits of more collective, reflective, and holistic viewpoints. Methodologically, the focus has been in the various boundaries, marginalisations and relationships of power, and the situatedness of the researcher. The combination of methods, based on narrative methodology, were intended to question hierarchical conceptualisations of science and knowledge, including the purpose of maintaining a dichotomy between perspectives that 'explain' and those that 'understand'. Understanding is a prerequisite for explaining (in any meaning of the terms) and therefore their separation into distinct methodological schools strikes as questionable. It reflects the micro-politics of the discipline and, as such, invites resistance.

It is of course also notable that the divide between problem-solving theories and critical theories is a dichotomy that I have maintained, despite its clear connection to explaining and understanding. However, while the former pair relates more strongly to the purposes of research and is inclusionary in nature, the latter pair relates to the legitimacy of research and is arguably more exclusionary. Thus, I am not arguing for the removal of all dichotomies per se, but for the questioning of their origins and purposes. Furthermore, I have also criticised the position of the distant observer and yet, I have carried out this entire research without ever witnessing a single Transition initiative. I have also only included the 'view from the top', meaning the works of Hopkins and the Transition Network rather than voices of actual participants (although Hopkins and the members of the

Transition Network *are* participants of the first Transition initiative in Totnes, UK). However, these choices have been based on practical constraints of time and resources rather than on personal preferences *per se*. Moving on, it would be interesting to carry out further research into the diversity, rather than unity, of movement narratives. Another likely prospect for further research would be to start a Transition initiative in my own locality and thereby carry out participatory action research. Further research could also utilise theories of performative resistance (see e.g. Kulynych 1997) which have some considerable similarities between prefigurative perspectives. Most notably, both arguably represent a form of resistance and identity- and world-making with the purpose of re-creation (see Kulynych 1997, 335–336).

Either way, increasing IR's understanding of radical change will most likely require a multidisciplinary approach – something that should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat. A core weakness of this thesis has perhaps been the fact that sociological and political science research has not been considered enough as these certainly have much to offer. However, it would have been difficult to extend the theoretical framework even further without risking its coherence. Therefore, further dialogue between (critical) IR and various strands of social movement research is a task reserved for another day.

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